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[e] computerartsproj@subscription.co.uk

Editorial [t] 01225 442 244
Rob Carney associate editor
[e] robert.carney@futurenet.co.uk
Johann Chan designer
[e] johann.chan@futurenet.co.uk
Ashley Young production editor
[e] casproduction@futurenet.co.uk
Matt Gallimore senior CD editor
[e] matt.gallimore@futurenet.co.uk
Simon Holland CD editor
[e] simon.holland@futurenet.co.uk
Sarah Williams software copyright co-ordinator

CD problems [t] 01225 822 743
Technical support: ca.support@futurenet.co.uk

Contributors
Cover image: Marta Dahlig
Contributors: Digital Jam, Dom Hall, Simon Holland, Steve Miller, Lewis Moorcroft, Neal Murren, Mark Penfold, Joseph Russ, Melissa Somerville, SoupMedia, Tim Warnock, Garrick Webster

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Contact
Computer Arts Projects, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW
[t] 01225 442 244 [f] 01225 732 295
[i] ISDN: 01225 789 293
[w] www.computerarts.co.uk

Advertising [t] 01225 442 244
Lee Haines key account manager
[e] lee.haines@futurenet.co.uk
George Lucas senior sales executive
[e] george.lucas@futurenet.co.uk
Rebecca Bell-Robinson classified enquiries
[e] rebecca.bell-robinson@futurenet.co.uk
Rosa Smith advertising manager
[e] rosa.smith@futurenet.co.uk

Production
Mark Anson production coordinator
[e] mark.anson@futurenet.co.uk

International licensing
Simon Wear international director
[e] simon.wear@futurenet.co.uk
[t] +44 (0) 1225 442 244

Management
Kelley Corten publisher
Dom Beaven publishing director
Gillian Carson senior editor
Roddy Llewellyn senior art editor

Distributed by
Marketforce (UK) Ltd
5th Floor, Low Rise Building, Kings Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London, SE1 9LS
[t] +44 (0) 20 7633 3333

Jason Comber trade marketing manager
[e] jason.comber@futurenet.co.uk

Future plc
Roger Parry non-executive chairman
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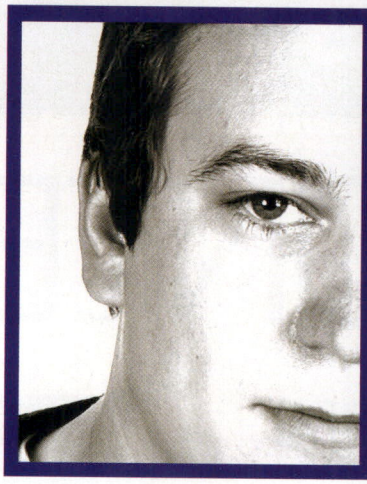
Welcome



Fantasy and sci-fi art is everywhere. There's no denying it. From big-budget movies to TV and comics, the art of the fantastic has captured the imagination of the mainstream – think *The Matrix*, *LOTR*, *Hitchhiker's Guide*, even *Sin City*. As Arnie Fenner tells us on page 10, "What used to be perceived as 'weird' can now garner an exclamation of 'cool'!"

With that in mind, we bring you the complete guide to getting into this going-overground industry. Tutorials include how to create amazing fantasy characters in *Poser*, paint concept art for movies in *Painter*, design stunning alien landscapes with the help of the free software on the CD, and draw and colour anime characters.

As if that wasn't enough, we bring you a world exclusive look at the art of *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Revolutions*, and an in-depth look at the concept art for *Hitchhiker's Guide*. Plus, there's an exclusive sealed section of some of the more risqué work from the world's leading artists. Enjoy...

Rob Carney, Associate Editor
rob.carney@futurenet.co.uk

Contributing creatives

COVER IMAGE
Marta Dahlig

Polish artist Marta Dahlig is responsible for the incredible image featured on our front cover. Part of a series the artist is creating based around the deadly sins, 'Vanity' is a beautifully constructed and technically excellent image that we couldn't resist showcasing. See Marta's site below for more of her awe-inspiring work.

[w] http://blackeri.deviantart.com

SoupMedia

Ian and Dominic Higgins currently run SoupMedia, a small design and illustration business, and Pixel Revolution Films. Learn how the pair created our fantasy 'dark angel' figure on page 16.

[w] www.soupstudio.com

Messa

Messa, aka Melissa Somerville, conjures up a bit of anime magic with two tutorials this issue: one on drawing, and one on colouring anime characters. See pages 30 and 38 respectively.

[w] http://messa.deviantart.com

Tim Warnock

Concept artist Tim Warnock brings you the ultimate guide to creating cool fantasy scenes for movies on page 82. We also talk to him about his art and inspirations on page 78.

[w] www.thenextside.com

Steve Miller

Experienced illustrator and author Steve Miller dishes out all manner of advice on creating illustrated fantasy beasts and freaks. See page 24 and prepare to be amazed...

[w] www.illustratorx.com

Tell us what topics you'd like to see covered in-depth in *Computer Arts Projects*. Contact us on:
[e] rob.carney@futurenet.co.uk

We're always on the lookout for new artists as well as established creatives – so if you're interested in contributing to the magazine, please send some examples of your work to **[e] johann.chan@futurenet.co.uk**

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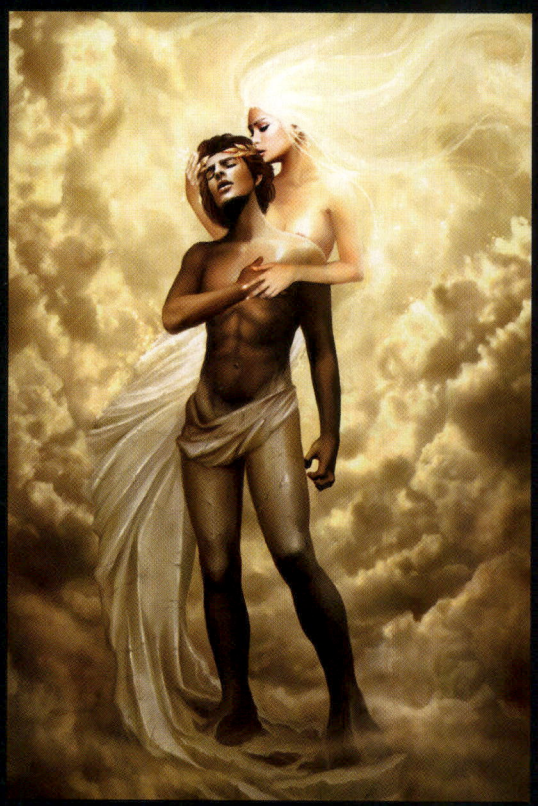
Video training
Improve your *Bryce 5.5* and *Painter IX* skills

Fantasy showcase

Bringing you a taster of the amazing fantasy and sci-fi art talent this issue...

Marta Dahlig

This month's cover artist. See more of Marta's amazing digital paintings at the address below.
[w] http://blackeri.deviantart.com/gallery



Above: Absolute
Right: Vanity
Top right: MoonGoddess
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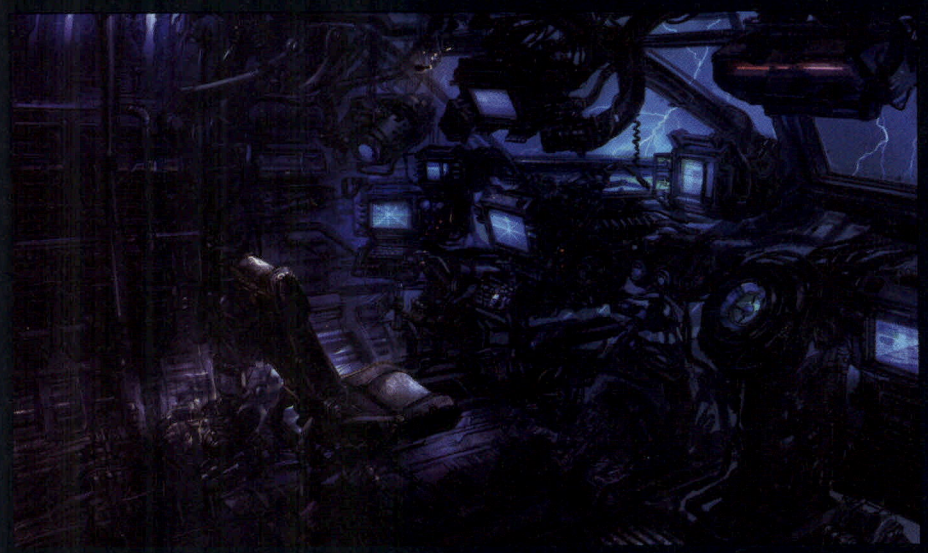
Max Dennison

Lead matte painter on *The Lord of the Rings*.
Read more about Max's work in our feature 'The mystery of fantasy art' beginning on page 10.
[w] www.maxdennison.com

Christian Scheurer

The concept artist for *The Animatrix*.
Find out more on in our feature 'Concept art in the movies' beginning on page 88.



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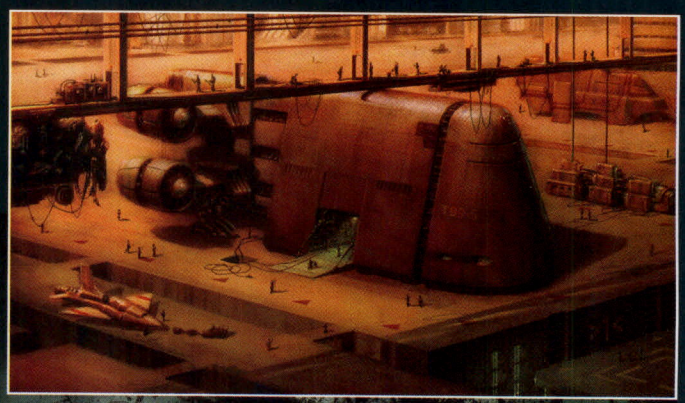
Tim Warnock

Read all about Tim Warnock's technique, inspiration and work in our profile beginning on page 78, then learn exactly how he builds up his fantasy concepts by following our exclusive tutorial, starting on page 82.

[w] www.thenextside.com



George Hull

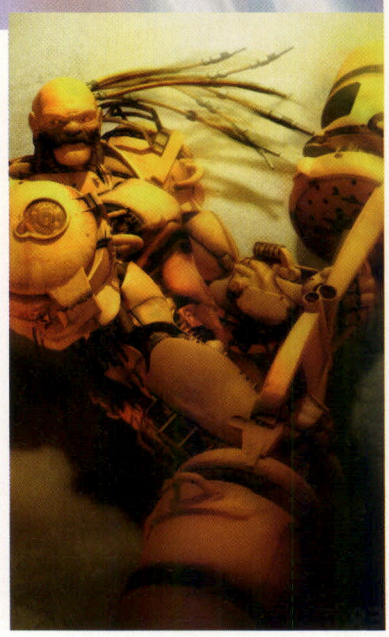
We bring you exclusive concept artwork from *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Revolutions*. See page 44 for much more!
[w] www.ghull.com

Aleksi Briclot

See more of Aleksi Briclot's amazing fantasy art in our feature 'The mystery of fantasy art' beginning on page 10.

John Mueller

Comic book artist, games designer and concept artist talks to us about the art of the fantastic, beginning page 10.



Above: "Fantasy art is for me what is not from this world," says Pascal Blanché. Space Seed, his vision of an interstellar nativity, shows a superb lightness of touch, honed as Art Director on *Myst IV*.

Right: Gladiator is a Blanché classic, mixing influences to produce a strange yet familiar reaction. "I like to reuse old themes," explains the artist himself, "to make a universe on the edge of two genres."

Feature

The mystery of fantasy art

From demon-slaying barbarians to warring space robots, fantastic art has the world's imagination in a headlock the mighty Conan would be pleased with. How did that happen?

As human understanding grows and deepens, the world necessarily becomes mundane, loses its mystery. Fantasy art is a response to this, almost an unconscious one. And like many unconscious drives, it has more wit than we give it credit for. The best fantasy art acknowledges the source of its urges and runs with them.

The desire to conjure the imagination onto paper must have struck a lot of people because the art of the fantastic is everywhere. Big budget cinema, TV, internet, books, comics... the proliferation is incredible. "What used to be perceived as 'weird' can now garner an exclamation of 'cool!'," marvels Arnie Fenner, Editor of *Spectrum*, the annual of fantasy art, **[w]** www.spectrumfantasticart.com.

No longer is fantasy the exclusive preserve of teenage boys with poor complexions and an unhealthy interest in dungeons. A quick look around shows that it has become the dominant iconography of our time. A deeper look shows that it's always been there waiting to go overground.

Enduring appeal

People don't just like this stuff, they love it. "I think we need it!" concludes Ubisoft's Pascal Blanché, **[w]** www.3dluvr.com/pascalb.

"Sometimes it's not easy to live in our world, and people need fresh air." Arnie Fenner shouts his agreement: "We NEED a little mystery, a little thrill in our lives," and fantasy gives us "a safe little taste of that."

But this isn't a desperate enterprise: "At heart it's fun," says Arnie. "It's fun to imagine, fun to think about the 'what if?' questions," and fun to capture them in colour. Pascal too sees the funny side of things: "There is nothing too serious in fantasy... it's all imaginary worlds, you know?"

Then Arnie takes a more serious tack: "You could argue that most religious art – regardless of which religion – could be interpreted as fantasy art." He's aware that this may not be a popular assertion but he has a point. "A lot of classical painters were doing nothing else but fantasy," chimes in Aleksi Briclot, the man behind those genius Spawn images, **[w]** www.aneyeoni.com.

This highlights the fact that fantasy has a strong realist tendency. John Mueller (**[w]** www.muellerart.com) is a comic book artist, games designer and concept artist who sees this as a strength: "I think this type of stuff is so popular because it is so well executed." For John the desire to see fantasy has always been there – it just took high-tech production techniques to popularise it.

Credibility gap

Despite the fact that the entire world seems to have either come out of the fantasy closet or fallen under Peter Jackson's magic spell, fantasy art still suffers a bit of an image problem. "It's just that some people find it futile and not serious enough," offers Pascal. But why should that be, particularly given the strong classical influence?

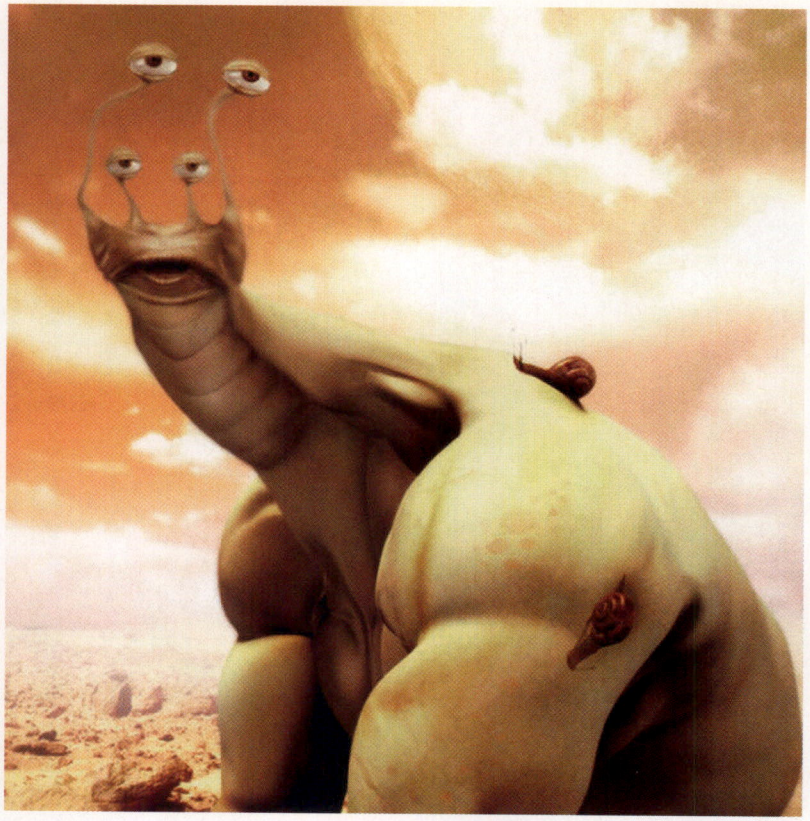
"There's a subconscious suspicion that it's kids' stuff." It's unfortunate, says Arnie, but to some, "professing a liking for fantasy is as good as confessing to having questionable taste." Aleksi says what nobody wants to: "Maybe it's because there's a lot of adolescent clichés: muscular barbarians, big-breasted Valkyries and so on."

But why should this discredit the incredible work being produced by the likes of Aleksi, John and Pascal? It's not what you do, it's the way that you do it, as Aleksi says, "You can do fantasy with quality." John goes further by saying that he doesn't believe the image thing is a problem any longer: "I think those people with superior attitudes on the subject are in the minority these days."

As John so rightly points out, "Peter Jackson won an Oscar for *Lord of the Rings*.

Above: Pascal's time in the world of video games has led him to value characterisation and an appreciation of narrative. "I try to add in my illustrations a bit of a storytelling," he says. This image, Recon, combines the two well.

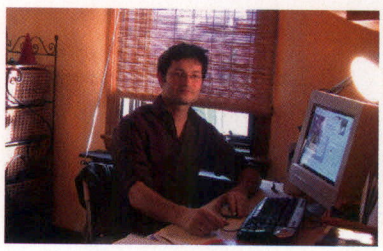
Left: As gaming enthusiasts around the world will immediately recognise, this image by former *Swamp Thing* artist John Mueller was created for Id Software's *Quake 3 Arena*.



Above: "There is nothing too serious in fantasy," says Pascal Blanché. Still, the Dark Lord looks a bit pensive.

Above right: Snail Master shows that Pascal has a sense of humour, something fantasy has a tendency to overlook.

Right: Pascal Blanché in Montreal, where he art directs for Ubisoft.



The Matrix, Hitch Hiker's Guide and *Sin City* were all number one at the box office on opening weekend." And if that doesn't convince you, Pascal has a simple solution: "Lots of people find it childish to have an interest in fantasy. I think that it's good to be able to revive our childhood."

Fantasy themes

We still have to establish the constituent elements of fantasy art, its raw materials, its themes. "Fantasy art has no real boundaries," so, says Pascal, "do whatever you want." Arnie doesn't believe this limits the genre to simple escapism: "The best fantasy art can explore any and all aspects of the human condition."

He rounds that off with an example which has almost become an archetype: "One artist could paint a robot rampaging through a city and it would be simple pulpish entertainment." There's nothing wrong with that, but "another could create a canvas that uses the robot as a metaphor for feelings of detachment or alienation."

He then gets postmodern on us: "Likewise, how a work of art is interpreted is beyond the painter's control: once it's offered to the public, they view it however they wish regardless of the artist's original intention." The fantastic is more an attempt to accurately document the gymnastics of the mind. It's unashamedly popular in its aspirations, that's why it's looked down on by 'high' art.

John Mueller provides an illustration. "I think early in my career I had some desire to be 'taken seriously' as an artist." There's no shame in that, but what he came to discover about himself as an artist is that "I'm happiest when I'm painting some big ugly dude smashing the crap out of some other big ugly dude." Round of applause please.

Community influences

Aleksi Briclot gives us some insight into his creative process: "I like trying new things and discovering new paths." This attitude is a vital part of any healthy art form. "What I love beyond everything is feeding the brain and digging through ideas."

The blossoming online community and the success of big budget movies like *LOTR* are a kind of poisoned chalice to fantasy art. On the one hand, helping to gain credibility; on the other, threatening a kind of monolithic whitewash. "I think if I had a community like the one on the internet when I was growing up, I would be a vastly different artist." John Mueller is worried about this: "I mean it's cool, but also it's incestuous."

The temptation to copy instead of breaking new ground can be overwhelming. "I think a lot of artists are cheating

Above: Spawn Ethaan by Aleksi Briclot. "You can do fantasy with quality," says Aleksi, who is living proof that his statement is true. And what's more, it's always been so: "A lot of classical painters were doing nothing else but fantasy!"

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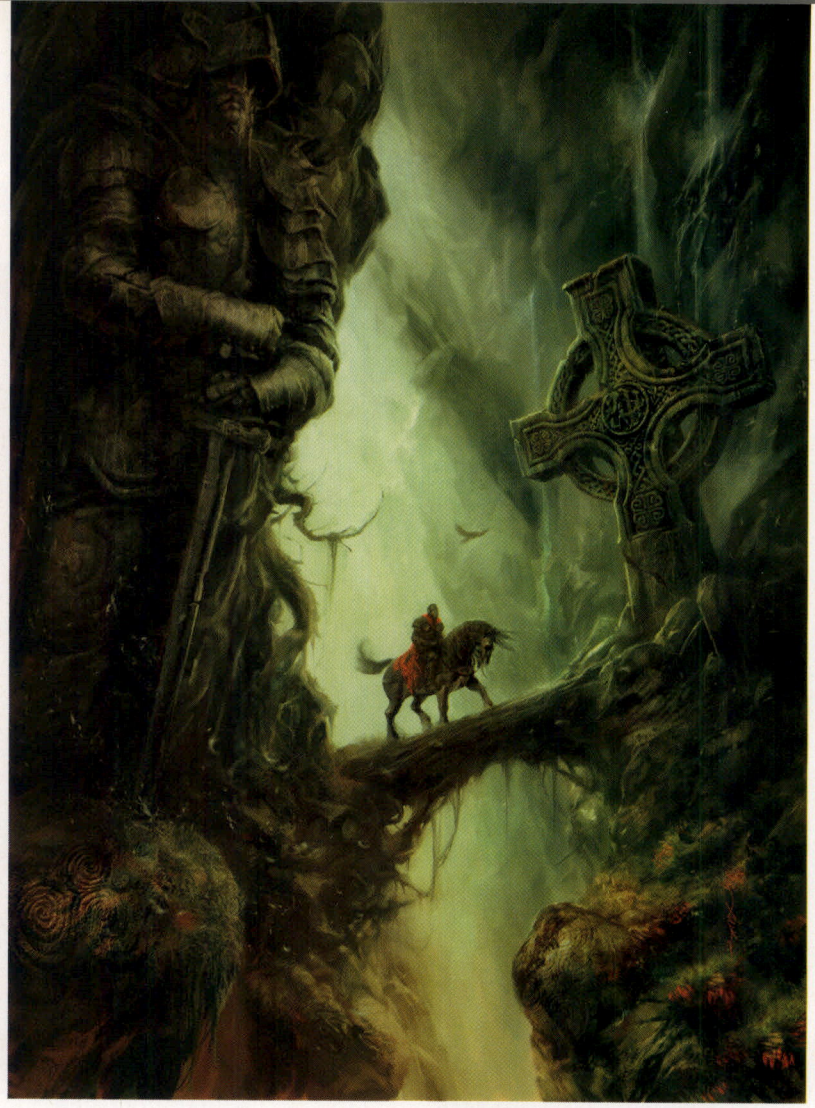
Left: "Most of what I learned," says John Mueller, "I picked up living in a shack in rural Massachusetts." It was during this two-year stint that he produced his own comic book, *Oink*. This image, Heaven's Butcher, is an impressive cover image from that series.



The fine art of matte painting

Max Dennison has an impressive list of credits as a digital matte painter: *The Lord of the Rings*, *Revenge of the Sith* and *The Hitch Hiker's Guide* among them. But don't expect him to steal any scenes intentionally: "My work is most successful if people don't notice it!"

The object of the game is to shoot the impossible: "The castle on the hill, the mountains of Mars or the hangar on a spaceship." For this reason, matte painting often overlaps with fantasy art but it's a wider discipline.

"Fantasy art tells a distinctive story in a very 'literal' way," says Max. "It serves an idea on a plate to you and tells you clearly that this is what 'my' world looks like." This means clients want photo reality, they've already done the imagining, thank you very much.

If it's unalloyed fantasy you're after then the precursor of the matte painting is what you want, concept art: "It allows for all the expression that the artist can muster, and is the only time where the artist has licence to fully explore the theme."

Max Dennison has worked on top Hollywood fantasy films. See some of his matte paintings in our showcase starting on page 8.

themselves out of their own voice," says John. "I try not to peruse the professionals' sites too much. While I love the art and it being so accessible, you can't 'unsee it'." When you next sit down to work, guess what pops out? Smeagol.

Digital developments

Oddly for a world inhabited by elves and goblins, fantasy has a huge appetite for digital technology. The new generation of fantasists currently swapping notes on sites such as conceptart.org would look at you gone-out if you suggested an oil on canvas solution to that bionic werewolf problem.

John Mueller recalls a time when this wasn't so: "I remember showing someone one of my digital pieces and they were like 'Wow that's amazing' and they asked 'Can I see the original?'" At this point, John was forced to explain that there was no 'original' as such, just some ones and zeros. "There was sort of this sad disappointed look in their eyes like I had just pissed on the great mystery of life."

The influence of Hollywood's industrial exploitation of fantasy art is undeniable. Driving forward technique and putting this in the hands of youths with role-playing habits to feed has generated a global mutual support group for anyone itching to express their fantastical yearnings. This is an unprecedented upswing, but there is a flip side.

"An original painting can take on a life of its own when hung in a gallery," explains Arnie Fenner. "There's something magic that happens when you're standing in front of an original." This simply can't ever happen with a digital piece. "The computer and the software create an artificial barrier between the artist and their audience." Overcoming this will make digital truly all-conquering.

The benchmark

To a certain extent, any field is best described by its leading proponents. For fantasy, one name stands out: Frank Frazetta. "Frank is sort of a force unto himself," says Arnie. "He was the perfect artist for the perfect subject at the perfect time." But for all this he is not alone. "Frazetta is certainly a quintessential fantasy artist, but there are a lot of quintessential fantasy artists."

Aleksi has the right idea: "The rules are always the same. You have something to express through an image so find the best way to do it." Take this as your starting point, not someone else's solution to the same problem "Then it's all about style, composition and colour." In this, fantasy is no different from reality. ca-p

Above: Todd McFarlane's Spawn has never looked more gloriously wicked than when penned by Aleksi Briclot.
© Wizard of the Coast and Todd McFarlane Productions

Opposite page: These pieces show Aleksi's ability to move between styles and moods with ease. "I like to think that what you have to express must dictate the form and not the opposite," he says explaining this.

Left: That looks painful. A piece of Aleksi's work for Oni Gakari.

Full Spectrum anthology

"Art annuals aren't uncommon," confesses Arnie Fenner, one half of the editing duo responsible for *Spectrum*, the fantasy art yearbook. "But it always seemed that fantastic art was under-represented." Not any more.

In 1984, Arnie and his wife Cathy attended an exhibition of science fiction artwork held by the Society of Illustrators in New York. As Arnie recalls, "It was a virtual who's-who of contemporary genre artists," but the Society didn't even do a book or catalogue to chronicle the event. Frustrated at this oversight, Arnie and Cathy set about developing the idea for a fantasy art anthology which would document the best and latest developments in this incredibly vibrant field.

Now on Spectrum 11, the annual competition selects from works variously described as fantasy, science fiction, horror or just 'skewed versions of reality'. Preferring this wider remit gives the title broader appeal but also makes it true that: "The *Spectrum* books are celebrations of the artists' imaginations."

[w] www.spectrumfantasticart.com

The Best In Contemporary Fantastic Art
SPECTRUM 11
SPECTRUM
FRANK FRAZETTA
ICON
A Retrospective by the Grand Master of Fantastic Art - Newly Revised & Updated With Additional Art
EDITED BY CATHY & ARNIE FENNER

Now on *Spectrum 11*, the annual survey of all that's good in the world of fantastic imagery is compiled by the Fenners: Arnie and Cathy.

Tutorial

[illustration] Ian and Dominic Higgins [w] www.livingposer.com

Create fantasy figures in Poser

Let your imagination soar, and create a digital illustration that's truly out of this world...

Over the following pages we'll show you how to use *Poser* (with a little help from *Z-Brush*) and *Photoshop* to create this image, Dark Angel.

Poser is often criticised for its rather limited modelling ability, but, as you'll see, by using dedicated modelling software such as *Z-Brush* (an excellent and inexpensive modelling app), along with *Poser's* Magnet tool, you can quite literally re-sculpt the features of any *Poser* figure, allowing you to create highly stylised figures.

As this is a 2D illustration, a fair amount of modelling was also done in *Photoshop*. Using the various Distort filters, such as the Liquify tool (which was implemented in *Photoshop 5*), certain elements were reshaped and any roughness was smoothed in the 3D models.

The lighting was also enhanced in *Photoshop*, using adjustment layers set to various blending modes. By using the masking tool, it was then possible to, quite literally, paint with light. Turn over for our step-by-step guide.

Expertise provided by Ian and Dominic Higgins, who currently run SoupMedia ([w] www.soupstudio.com), a small design and illustration business, and Pixel Revolution Films ([w] www.pixelrevolutionfilms.com), a low budget film production company. View their Poser work at [w] www.livingposer.com.

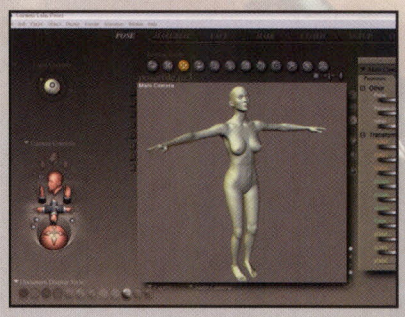
All the components needed to complete this tutorial can be found on the *Computer Arts Projects* CD72 in the Software\Tutorials\Tutorial files\Tutorial files\All\Sci-fi figures folder.

Part 1: The modelling

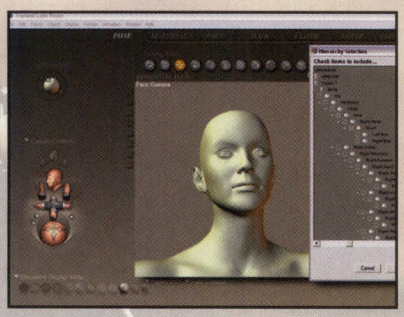
Begin the project by building an alien using *Poser* and *Z-Brush*...

Render engines

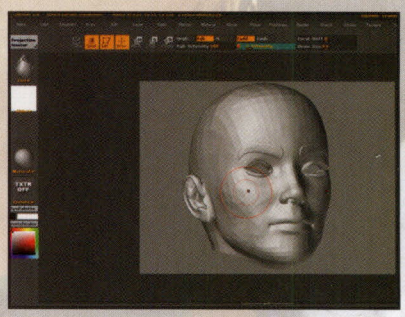
Poser 5 introduced the new *Firefly* render engine, which is capable of producing far more complex renders than the default *Poser* one. However, we found that often the default one produced sharper looking images, so when you come to render your final image, try both and see which gives the better results.



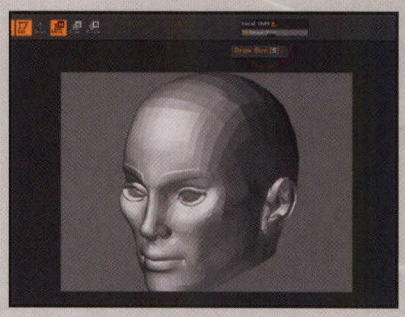
1 For our alien girl, we used the Victoria 2 model as our starting point. However, as the character design called for highly stylised features, we decided to export the head mesh from *Poser* and bring it into a more dedicated modelling program. Choose Export>Wavefront OBJ.



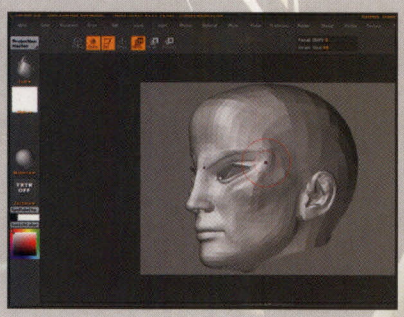
2 In the Hierarchy window make sure only the head is selected. Name the exported mesh, select a folder to save it in, and then select the 'As Morph Target' option. This enables you to bring the re-sculpted head back into *Poser* as a morph target.



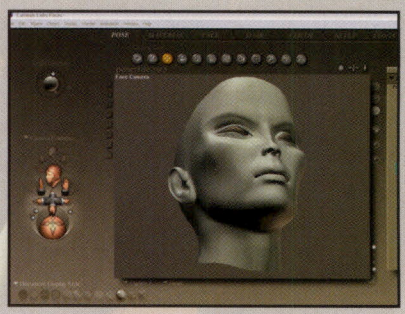
3 For this project we use *Z-Brush* from Pixel Logic. Select the Polymesh3D tool from the Tool menu (it's the star-shaped one). Then import the head mesh. To manipulate the head mesh once it's imported, you need to select the Edit button on the menu at the top. A red circle appears indicating that you are in Edit mode.



4 Making sure that the Symmetry tool has been selected (from the Transform menu), you can begin the modelling process. Use the Move tool to pull the cheekbones out and lift them higher. The Draw Size option enables you to adjust the size of the tool.



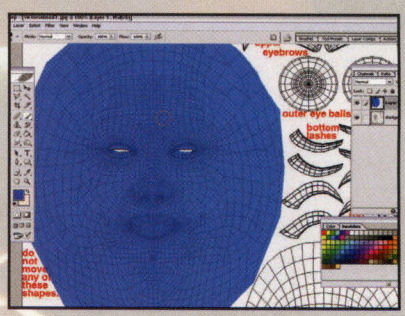
5 It's vitally important, when working on the re-sculpting process, to constantly change the angle of your model, so as to check for any tears in the mesh. To change the angle of the mesh, left-click on to an empty space in the window and keep the mouse de-pressed.



6 Export the mesh out from *Z-Brush*. Back in *Poser*, apply the new OBJ as a morph target. Then refine the modelling process by manipulating the various morphs built into the Victoria 2 model. Turn the eyeballs and the rest of the body invisible – you should find it easier to work this way.

7 The modelling was taken further by using magnets (Object>Create Magnet). We lifted the magnet to elongate the face and tilted it back slightly. The large circle is the Magnet zone and by shifting or resizing it, you can affect specific areas of the face.

8 With most of the facial modelling completed, refit the eyeballs into the sockets. This can be a bit fiddly, so be prepared to spend some time adjusting the settings of each eyeball. You can also apply the anime eye morph that comes with Victoria to enlarge the eyeballs.



9 Using the free head texture template from Daz3D.com, create the texture map in *Photoshop*. First, fill in the basic skin colour (blue) and then set to work on building up variations in the skin tone. On a new layer, apply the Cloud filter (Filter>Render>Clouds).

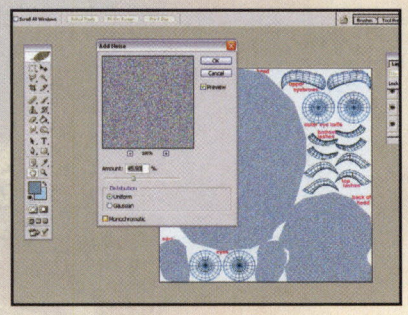
Part 2: Texture map

Begin the texture mapping by fleshing out your character...

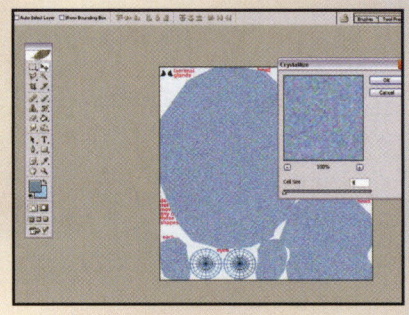
Camera usage

The *Poser* camera works just like a real one, so treat it like one. Play with the lens settings. For example, when working on a portrait, we find a focal setting of between 70–80mm gives the best results. If you use too low a setting, the face becomes distorted; too high and it becomes flat. For the Dark Angel image we used a focal setting of 40mm.

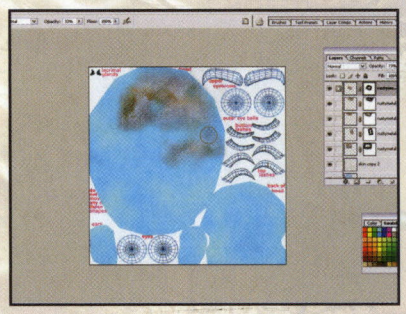
1 When applying the Cloud Filter for skin tone, make sure the foreground colour and background colours on the toolbar are set to a darker and lighter tone of the basic skin colour. This layer is then applied in Overlay mode.



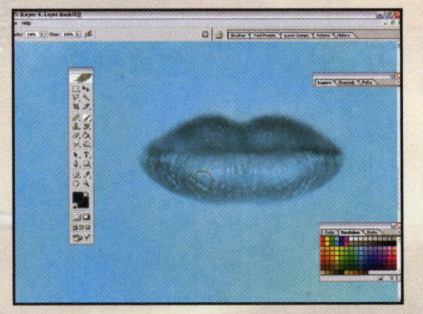
2 Duplicate the base colour layer, bring it to the front and apply the Noise filter (Noise>Add Noise). Set the noise level to about 45. Then apply a little blur to soften it using the Blur More filter (Filters>Blur>Blur More).



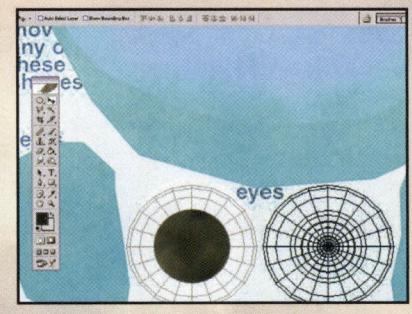
3 Next, apply the Crystallise filter (Filters> Pixelate>Crystallise) with a setting of about 6. The layer should be set to Luminance and the opacity to 15 per cent. Then duplicate this layer, desaturate it and apply the Find Edges filter (Filters>Stylise>Find Edges). This is then blurred and its opacity faded to about 10 per cent.



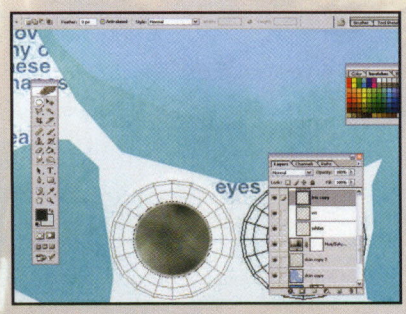
4 We also wanted to give the skin a metallic look, so we found a photo of some rusty metal, dragged it on to the texture map, resized it, and then duplicated the layer several times. Use the Masking tool to paint away parts of each layer and blend them into the skin.



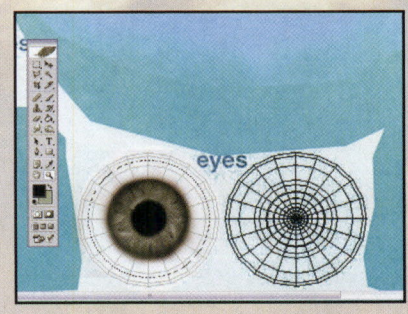
5 Zooming in close, paint in details around eyes and on the lips. Here you can also use photographic resources, blending them in carefully to match the painted elements. Remember though: too much detail is not vitally important as you'll be painting in further detail over the rendered 3D image.



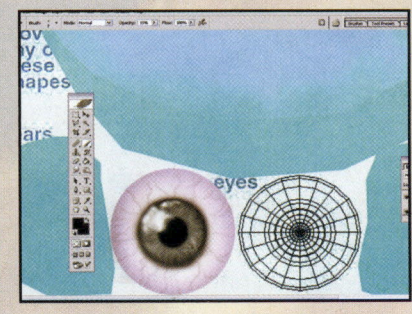
6 The eyes are what really bring your character to life. Change the foreground colour on the toolbar to a dark grey and the background colour to a very pale grey, then use the Marquee tool to create a circle and apply the Cloud filter. This will be the iris.



7 With the iris still selected, add some noise, and then apply a radial blur set on Zoom mode (Filters>Blur>Radial Blur). Now it's beginning to look like an iris. Using the Liquify tool, shape the iris pattern by applying a little of the Twirl brush.



8 On a new layer, create a smaller circle for the pupil and fill it with black. Then select a larger area around the eye with the Marquee tool, and apply a zoom blur. If the selection area is too big, the pupil will become a dark smear.



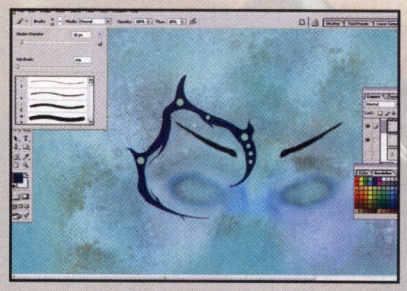
9 Next, work on the white of the eye. We gave ours a purple hue. We painted in veins then, using the Smudge brush, we softened them slightly. We also added a reflection to the eyeball, again using the Smudge brush to soften its edges.

Part 3: Body work

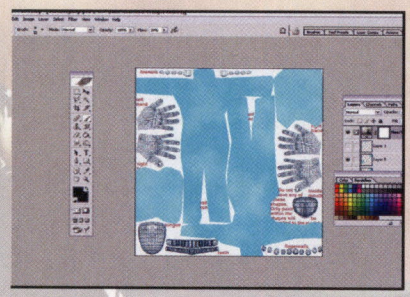
Finish the texture mapping on the face and add armour to the body...

Lighting tips

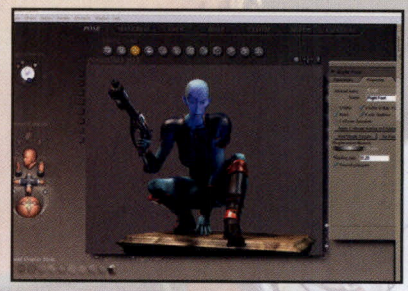
Be prepared to spend a lot of time on the lighting of your scene. Good lighting enhances your models, adds a sense of depth and creates atmosphere. It's well worth reading up on photographic/filmic lighting to learn the basics of good lighting (as well as for inspiration). Don't forget that good lighting set-ups can be saved in the lights library for use in the future.



1 Paint the eyebrows and begin work on the facial markings. When working on details like these, it's important to constantly check how they look on the actual model. Work with the *Poser* file open at the same time so you can constantly render previews.



2 Keep the body texture map fairly simple, blending photographic elements with the digital paint techniques used on the face map. Don't worry too much about seams in the texture map because they can easily be painted over later (remember this is a 2D illustration).



3 Back in *Poser*, we kit out our figure in her armour using props downloaded from Renderosity.com. You can find lots of useful free props on sites such as Renderosity. Once dressed and armed, position your model and set up the camera angle.

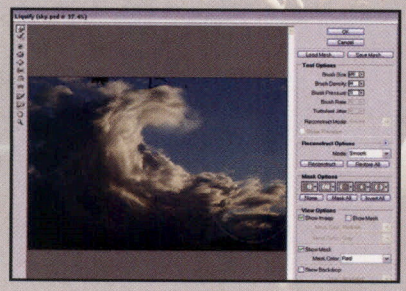
Part 4: Putting it all together

The next stage is to create the backdrop and the 2D elements...

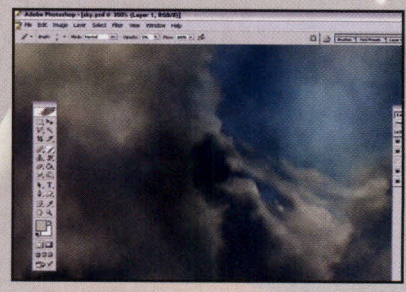
Multi-views

Take advantage of the multi-view function if you're using *Poser Pro* or later, especially in the early stages of modelling. This enables you to have up to four different viewpoints open simultaneously, allowing you to see your model from different angles as you work.

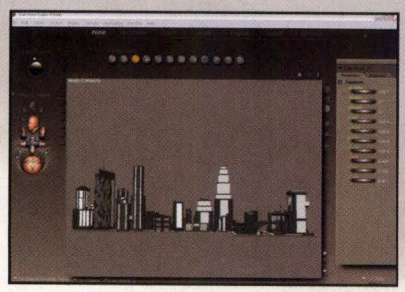
1 Having a good collection of photographic resources at hand can be valuable when it comes to creating images. To create the dramatic sky backdrop, we blended together several different photographs that we had taken of clouds (you can find these on the CD).



2 Using the Liquify filter, shape the clouds to create a stronger sense of movement in the sky. Use the Twirl tool and the Forward Warp tool set to various sizes and degrees of strength. Work slowly, making sure not to blur too much detail.

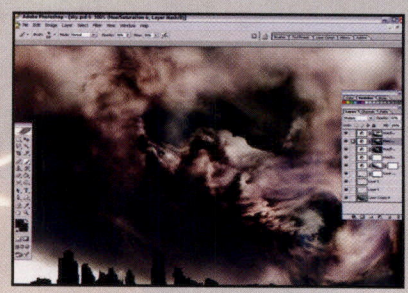


3 Blend the layers of photographic skies together. Using the Paintbrush tool, paint in the finer details to the sky backdrop, such as highlights and shadows that had been blurred. More cloud definition can also be added. The Smudge tool can be used to help shape the edges of the clouds.



4 Next we want to add a destroyed city to our backdrop. Free models that we sourced online serve as a starting point. There are many decent quality ready-made 3D models available online in places such as 3D Cafe and Renderosity.

5 Render an image of the 3D cityscape you construct and in *Photoshop* began to model the image further. Using the Mask tool, paint away parts of the buildings to create the look of a war-devastated city. Details, such as debris, can then be painted in.



6 The city was added to our backdrop composition and then we began to work further on the colouring. By applying various Hue/Saturation effects to Adjustment Layers you can gradually built up the colour scheme. These layers can be set to different lighting modes, such as Hardlight and Multiply.

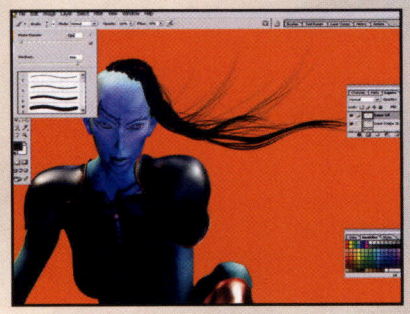
Putting it all together continued...

Magnetic forces

If you use multiple magnets in your scene at one time, it's a good idea to use the Lock Actor option, which is located in the Figure menu. This will lock your magnets in place, preventing you from moving them accidentally, once you have them positioned.

7 Back in *Poser,* set up the lighting for your 3D figure. Import the backdrop as a background picture as reference for the lighting. For high quality renders, always use high map size settings on your lights, but remember that render times will increase.

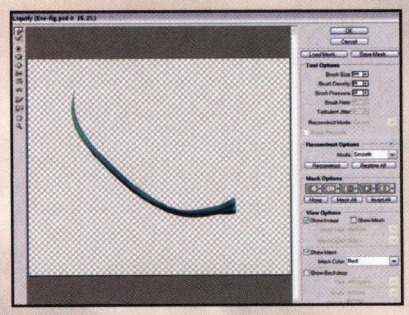
8 Render the figure (we used *Poser's* default render engine) and save the image as a *Photoshop* file. *Poser* automatically renders files with an alpha channel, making it easy to cut out your figures. Then, using the Airbrush tool, paint over any imperfections in the model, such as folds in the mesh.



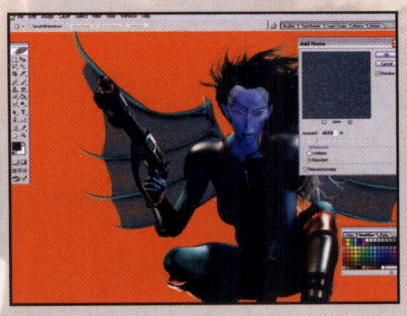
9 Next, begin to paint in the hair. You can use the Liquify and the Smudge tool set to darken, to help shape and model the finer strands and details. Notice that we've added a colour fill background behind our figure. This helped us especially while working on highlights.

10 To create the backlighting effect for the hair, first duplicate the Hair layers and inverse them. The Highlight layers should then be dropped below the dark hair, and the dark hair should be carefully masked away to reveal the highlights beneath.

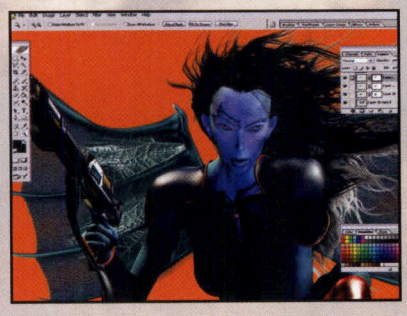
11 Using the Smudge tool and fine brushes, work further on refining the hair and adding in more details, such as the sheen. Work on the highlights further using the Dodge and Burn tool, set to very low pressures.



12 Begin work on the wings by first painting in the individual shapes to the bone structures. Some details, such as highlights and shadows, can be added and then the 'bones' can be shaped using the Liquify tool. Position the individual bones and blend the layers.



13 Paint in the shapes of the wings. To help create a more textured feel to the skin, first add a little noise, and blur it slightly to soften the texture. Then apply the Craquelure filter.



14 To create the look of veins and arteries in the wings, you can use a photo of a close-up of a leaf (see leaf.tif on the CD). We built up a texture for our wings using this photo. The finished texture can then be duplicated several times and applied in various lighting modes over the wings.

15 The completed figure can then be dropped into the main canvas and the image flattened. You can work further on the lighting effects, such as the hair and the colouring, by using Adjustment Layers and applying them in various lighting modes over the image. ca-p

PRIZES WORTH £1,000!

Competition

[w] www.corel.co.uk

Win Painter IX!

Five copies of the amazing digital art tool to be won...

This month we've teamed up with Corel to give you the chance to win one of five copies of the fantastic *Painter IX*, an essential tool for any digital artist. *Painter* has long been the de facto standard for creating stunning digital art: its selection of realistic brushes and media is unrivalled by any other application and it blurs the boundaries between traditional and digital art.

New to version IX is a plethora of digital art features that will enable you to create great artwork faster. These include the new Artists' Oils painting system, enabling you to mix up paint on a palette, as you would in real life, and paint with a finite amount of oil. For anyone wanting to take their painting skills into the digital age it's a great feature.

Next there's an improved Digital Watercolour feature set – paint now stays wet between sessions and the wet fringe can be changed dynamically, enabling experimentation after the brush stroke has been applied.

Quick Clone is a brilliant way of transforming your digital photos (or part of them) into digital art, the new Snap to Path painting feature will help you turn your Bézier paths into digital strokes, and the integration of KPT effects will help you create amazing filter effects. *Painter IX* is also much faster and easier to use, and it's compatible with *Photoshop*, making it easy to switch between the two applications.

This software is the best tool for creating digital art out there, and we're giving you the chance to get your hands on it for absolutely nothing. Answer the simple question on the right and enter at **[w] www.computerarts.co.uk/competitions**. Or send us a postcard with your answer to: **Painter competition, *Computer Arts Projects*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.**

Check out the images opposite to see what's possible with the power of *Painter*, and for more information on Corel *Painter* and the company's other creative software see **[w] www.corel.co.uk**.

The question

Which *Painter IX* feature enables you to mix up paint on a palette as you would in real life?

The rules

The closing date for this competition is 27 July 2005. Employees of Corel and Future Publishing, their agents and families are not permitted to enter. Multiple entries are not accepted.

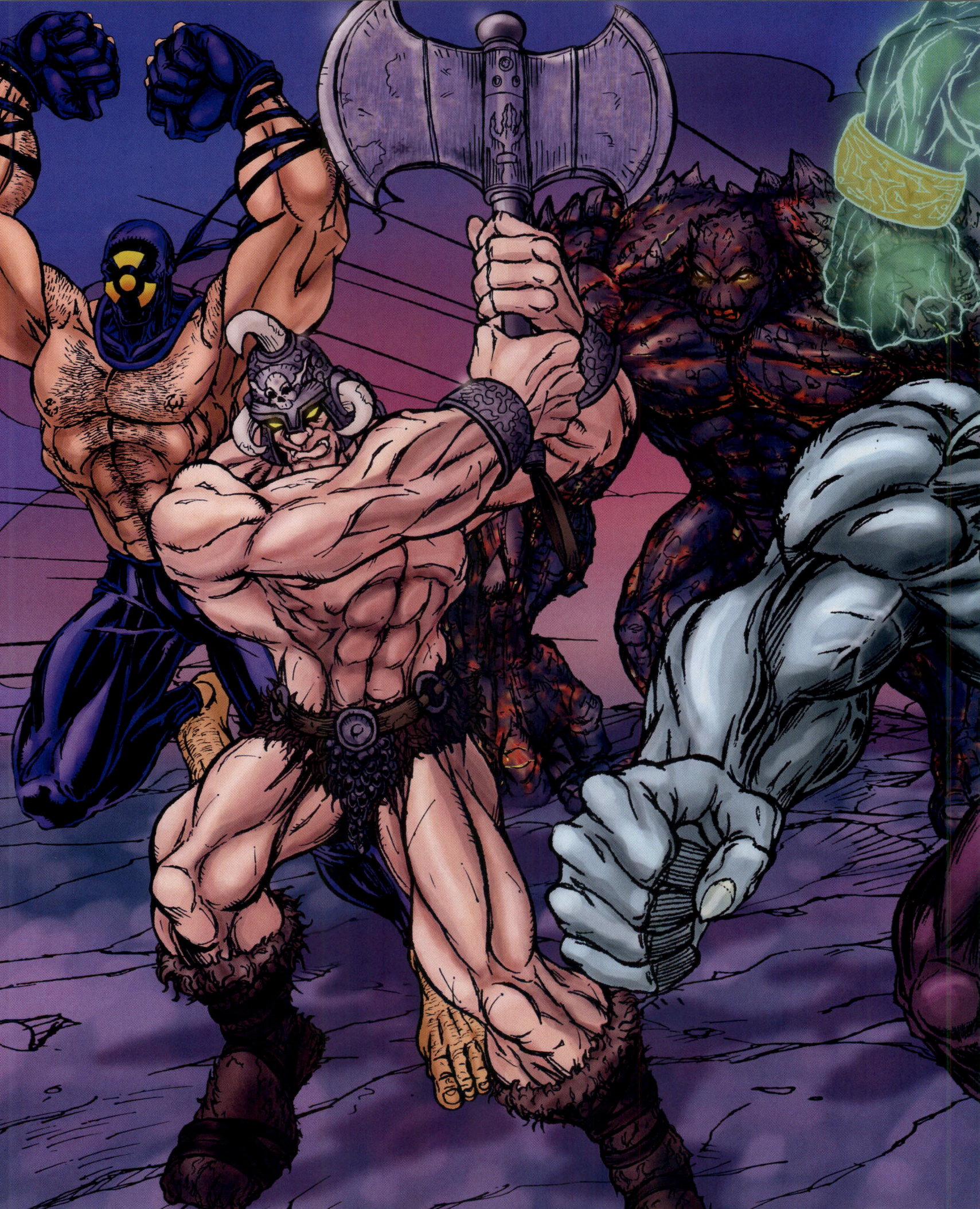
The Editor's decision is final and there are no cash alternatives. No other correspondence will be entered into. If you are entering by post and do not wish any of the companies involved in this competition to contact you with further offers, please indicate this on your entry. We will not pass your details on to third parties. ca-p

The best *Painter* artists in the world show you what's possible with this amazing application...

Left: Andrew Jones [w] www.conceptart.org

Top: Don Seegmiller [w] www.seegmillerart.com

Above: Tim Warnock [w] www.thenextside.com
See more of Tim's work on page 78.



Feature

[illustration] Steve Miller [w] www.illustratorx.com

30 fantasy tips

We follow acclaimed character artist Steve Miller as he creates a stunning comic illustration...

Being able to knock out fantastic fantasy characters comes with experience, and who better to share that experience than self-proclaimed "merry mad monster maker" Steve Miller. Steve has written a number of *How to Draw Books*, including *Freaks!: How to Draw Fantastic Fantasy Characters* (animal people), *Scared!: How to Draw Fantastic Horror Comic Characters* (monsters), *Thunder Lizards!: How to Draw Fantastic Dinosaurs*, and *Gung Ho!: How to Draw Fantastic Military Characters and Vehicles*, all available from Watson-Guptill publications.

Over the following pages, Steve shares some of his best fantasy art tips learned from years of drawing characters for animation, games, action figures and comics. He'll talk you through how he has designed, sketched, scanned and coloured a few of the wild denizens from his imagination.

These tips will help spark the fire of your imagination and enable you to unleash some fantastic fantasy freaks of your own.

1 Fantasy kit

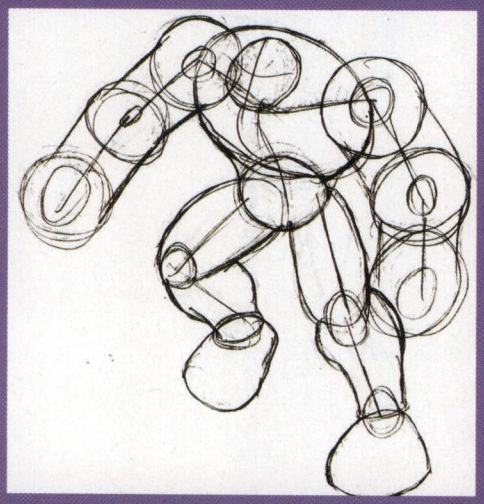
For colouring and image manipulation, I use mainly *Photoshop CS* and *Painter IX* running on a PC powered by an Athlon Thunderbird 1.23GHz processor with 1GB of RAM. My computer has a S3 Trio 3D/2X 8MB AGP Video chipset to help push all those pixels around almost as fast as I can paint them. For brush input, I mainly use a 4x5 Wacom PenPartner graphics tablet. I have a couple of larger tablets, but I keep coming back to this compact stand-by. My initial drawings are done by hand on a drawing table purchased when I was 12. Over the years, this coupling of traditional and digital mediums has evolved into a workflow which provides me with maximum flexibility in my art while greatly reducing my man hours.

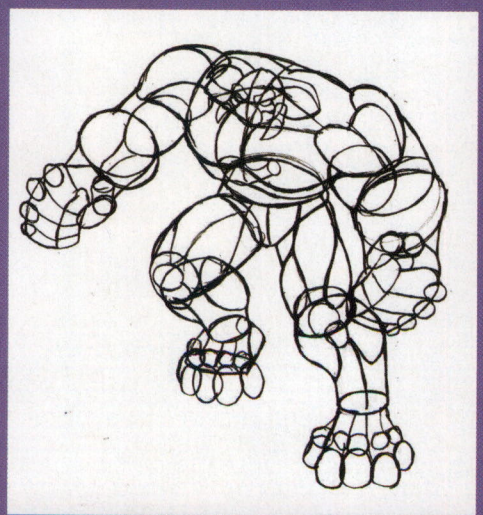
2 Coming up with concepts

I start a project by roughing out a few thumbnails and initial concepts for character designs. For this illustration, I knew I wanted several different mega-muscled fantasy characters coming right at the viewer. Group shots like this can become cluttered if they aren't designed with a central anchor point to capture the viewer's eye, so early on I decided I wanted a hulking Elephantman character to be the main focal point.

3 Basic body work

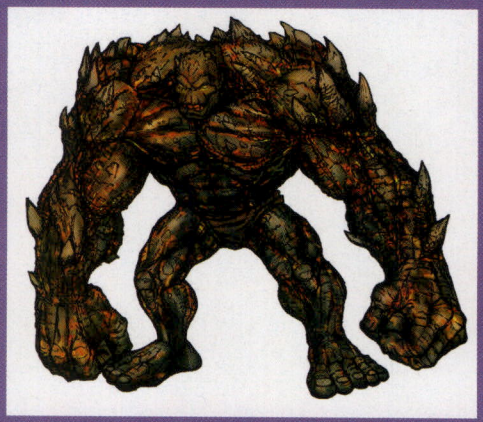
The early stages are the most crucial of any drawing, because it's here you'll establish a pose that will either appear fluid and life-like or create a clunker which, no matter how expertly you render and colour, will still appear stiff. Once I'm happy with the pose, I draw a figure using basic building blocks such as modified cubes and cylinders, then I rough in anatomical features using bodybuilder magazines or anatomy books as reference. I usually do the initial pose lightly with a non-photo blue pencil so I can draw the more constructive step directly over it with a darker HB lead. I've reproduced both steps separately here and digitally darkened the line work to make them clearer.





4 Working in groups

Once I've finished the central character, I can go ahead and repeat the construction process for the other five characters. For a group shot of this size, I create a separate document for each character, which gives me several manageable small files instead of one mammothly huge one. This also provides maximum flexibility when I compose the final piece, because each figure can be moved freely about the drawing and moved either in front of or behind other characters to best serve the composition. I try to keep each element at the same level of completeness as I work, so I'll draw all the figures first, then colour them at the same time, and finally assemble the final illustration.



5 Scan your drawing

The character's basic individual construction drawings are scanned into *Photoshop* using an oversized Epson Expression 836XL scanner. The Epson is perfect for illustrators because it enables you to scan illustrations up to 800x1,600dpi, with a tabloid-sized area of 12.2x17.2 inches. At this stage in the drawing I don't need it at high resolution, so I set the scanner to colour scan at 150dpi.

6 Resize your sketch

In *Photoshop* I do a quick Colour Select (Select>Colour Range) to select and delete the non-transfer blue pencil marks, and then adjust the levels (Photoshop>Image>Adjustments>Levels) to darken the remaining pencil marks. Next, I resize the sketch to the size of the final drawing (Photoshop> Edit>Free Transform). For most projects, I prefer to work as large as possible so the drawing appears crisper when shrunk down and the details are tightened.

7 Choose a duotone

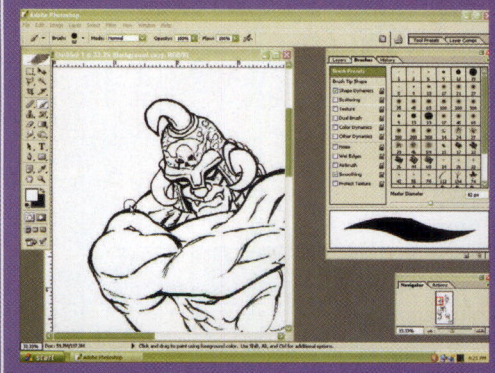
Once I have the drawing at the correct size, I change the mode to greyscale (Photoshop>Image>Mode>Greyscale). From here I change the mode one more time to Duotone (Photoshop>Image>Mode>Duotone.) The colour chosen for the duotone step should be extremely light. I usually use either a pastel green or lavender shade; it doesn't really matter what you choose because this colour won't appear in the final drawing. Fluctuating between purple and green will give your printer cartridges an even workout and won't drain one ink reservoir quicker than the others.

8 Printing and digital inking

I then print the drawing onto a sheet of 11x17-inch paper using my Epson Stylus Photo1200 printer. Depending on what the client wants, I'll use either cheap printer tabloid paper if the drawing is to be scanned then coloured, or sturdy Bristol board if the final pencil step is needed for a presentation. Regardless of the paper it's printed on, I do the final, tightly rendered pencil drawing right over the pastel printout. This is the most time-consuming step since my pencil lines will be cleaned and darkened for the final illustration in a process nicknamed 'dinking', an abbreviation for digital inking.

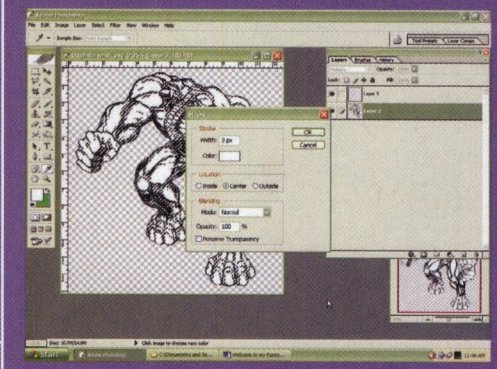
9 Convert to greyscale

When I have the final pencil drawing finished, I scan it back into *Photoshop*, set for colour at 600dpi. Then I use Colour Select again and delete to select and remove the pastel under-drawing, leaving only my final pencil marks. It's now safe to convert the drawing to greyscale mode. Again, the Levels are adjusted to darken my pencil marks so they appear black and the background is made a bright white. Once I have the artwork levels adjusted, I decrease my file size to 300dpi, the standard for print work.



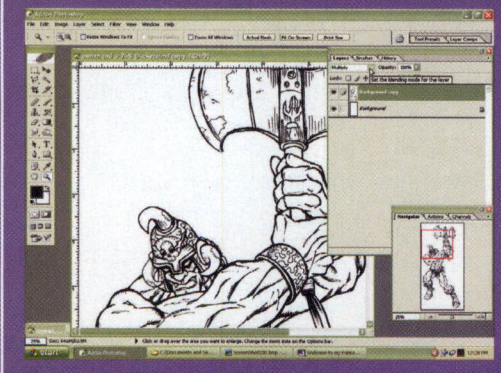
10 Specialised 'dinking'

This next tip is the most important step of my 'dinking' process and one not too many others use. I colour select the white areas of the drawing and then, on a new layer, I do a 3- or 4-pixel centre Stroke with white, blending Normal-Opacity 100 per cent, (Edit>Stroke). This process removes any dust or stray pixels and also softens the sometimes rough appearance of pencil marks while giving the lines a crisp inked looked. This can be repeated a few times, increasing the Stroke by 1 or 2 pixels until the line work appears suitably crisp. When I'm happy with the line work, I merge the Stroke layer down onto the drawing. Now the drawing is ready to be coloured.



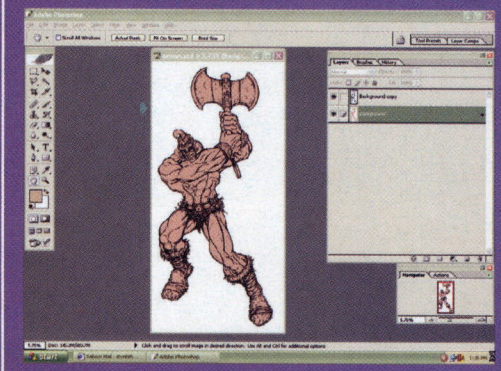
11 Prepare for colour

The line work layer is changed to Multiply for the blending mode and placed over a plain white background that will become the layer on which we do the actual colouring. The easiest way to select the figure completely is by using the Magic Wand tool to select all of the blank white background space around the character and then using the select inverse command (Photoshop>Select>Inverse).



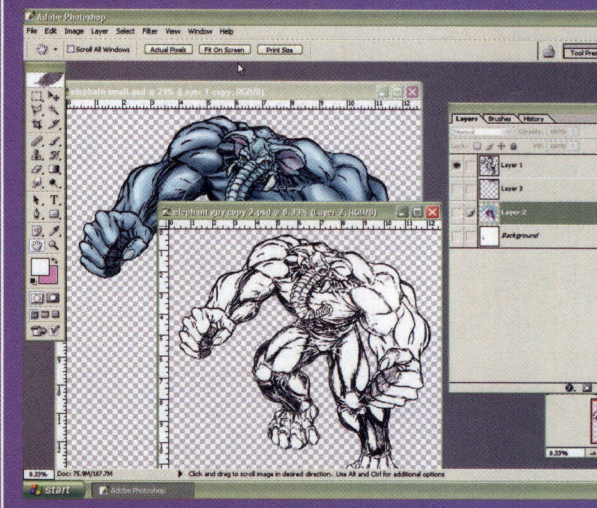
12 Lay flats

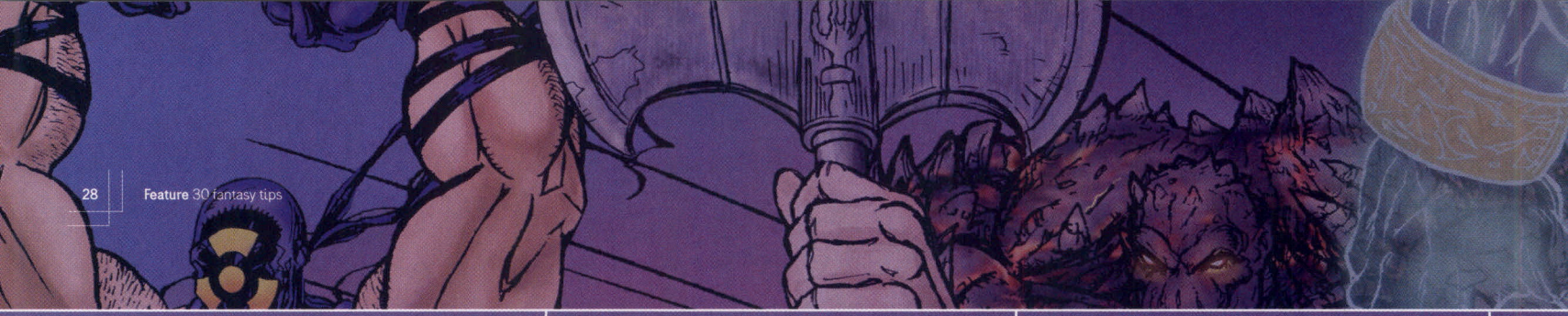
On the background layer, fill the selection with a medium tone that will be the central colour for the character. This process is known as 'laying flats'. Since this Axe-Wielding Barbarian is wearing minimal clothing, I've chosen a flesh tone for his flat colour.



13 Speed things up

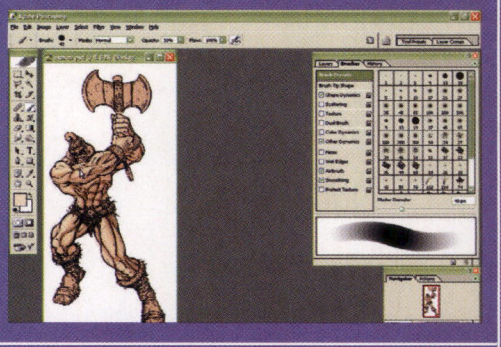
If you have a slow computer or a large file, you don't need to colour your work at the same high resolution you'll want for your final illustration. To speed up the colouring process, I create a duplicate file of the line work at a dpi of only 150. When I've finished the colouring process, I'll discard the line work layer and convert the remaining colour layer to 300dpi. You can then transfer the colour layer back to your original high-resolution line work file and the colours should line up perfectly.





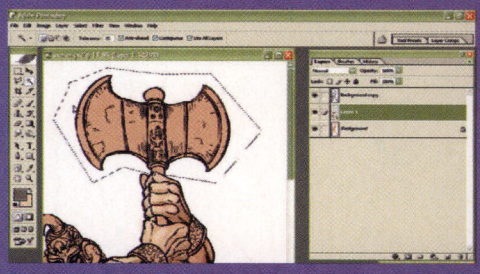
14 Highlights and shadows

Once I have a medium flat colour for the figure established, I begin to render the different anatomical features by adding highlights and shadows. I use a two-on-two tonal scheme. This means over my medium flat tone I will make four total passes over the character. On the first pass, I'll add medium highlights using a colour slightly lighter than my flat colour. On the next pass, I'll use a much lighter shade of my flat colour. Using this method enables me to build a believable three-dimensional form. Once I've completed my two passes at adding highlights, I go back over the figure twice more, each time adding a darker layer of shadow.



15 Add colour to accessories

With the basic figure finished, I colour his accessories. Create a new layer for the accessory colours and follow the same steps you used for the main figure, first laying a flat tone for the whole object and then going back and rendering it. For objects like his battle axe, which is surrounded by large areas of white, the fastest way to select it is to draw a quick Polygonal Lasso around the object and surrounding background and then use the Magic Wand to select the unwanted white areas while holding down the Alt/Opt key.

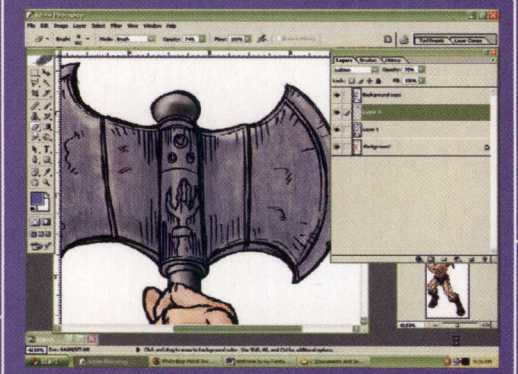


16 Damage effects

For a quick weathered or battle-damaged look, use alternating large patterns with one of the default Splatter brushes. I used just a couple of quick splatters of white-and-black with a splatter brush set at 30 per cent Opacity to give this axe the look of being well used.

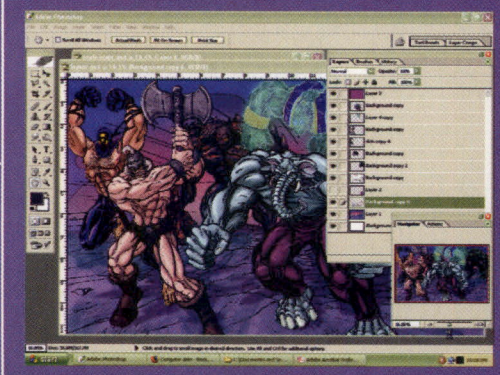
17 Metallic finishes

The axe is looking pretty good now, but here's how to give it a slightly more metallic look. On a new layer, reselect the axe head and fill it with a grey background and then add noise (Filter>Noise>Add Noise). In the dialog box, enter these values: Amount: 25, Distribution: Gaussian, and make sure Monochromatic is checked. Next run the motion blur filter (Filter> Blur>Motion Blur) set the Distance value to 75 pixels and keep the angle value at 0. This creates a grey square that looks like a square of aluminium. Change the Layer Mode to lighten and decrease the Opacity to 75 per cent. Now that's a battle axe any Barbarian would be proud to cleave an innocent with!



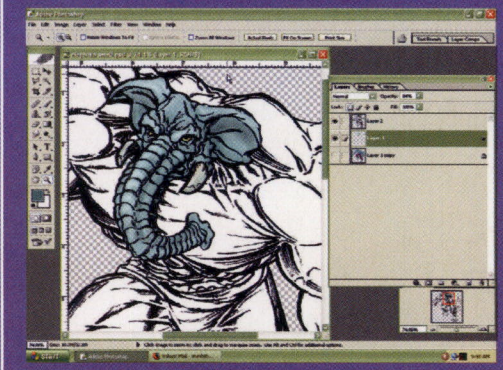
18 Overlapping figures

I have already decided the Axe-Wielding Barbarian character will be in the foreground of the illustration, in front of the Leaping Masked Wrestler character. When you have characters with similar overall colour palettes (in this case, flesh colour) overlapping, you run into the problem of the characters blending into each other. To help differentiate the figures and to also give them a greater sense of depth, I like to create a cool tone variation of the background figure. So using the Variations option (Image>Adjustments>Variations), I choose a variation of the Wrestler with more blue and cyan.



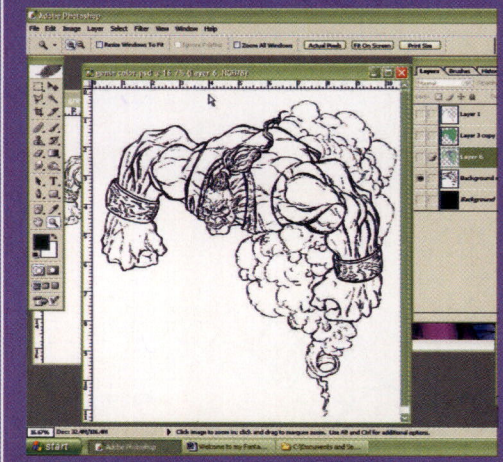
19 Variations options

You can also use the Variations command on parts of a character to make them stand out from the rest of the figure. For the Elephantman, I ran into the problem of his head not being as easily distinguished from the rest of his body as I would have liked. So by selecting just his head and using the Variations options, I was able to create a head just slightly more chromatic than the rest of the figure.



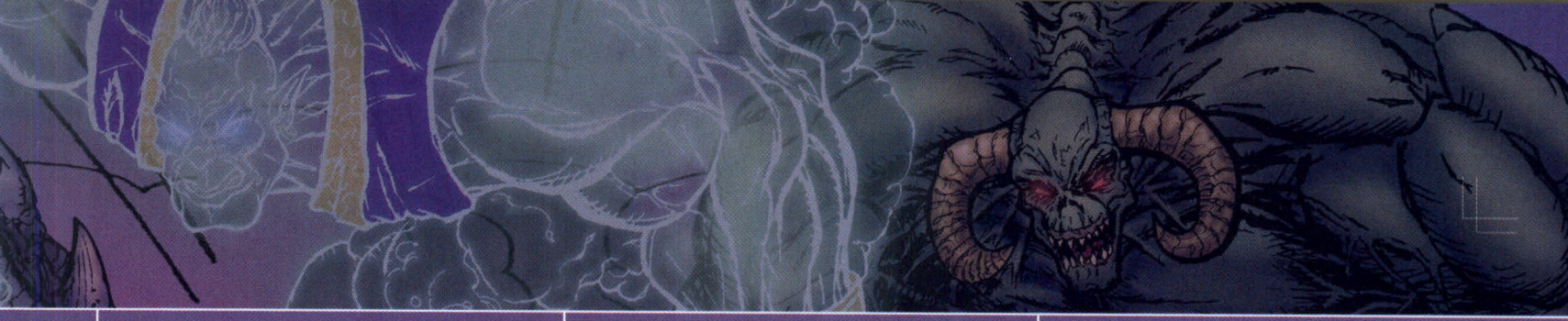
20 Glow-in-the-dark effects

For the Genie character, I knew I wanted to give him a slight glow-in-the-dark ghostly look. I drew and scanned him just like the other characters. For the colouring process, I didn't decrease the resolution of the line work, but coloured him full size because I knew I would be using some layer filters that are resolution specific.



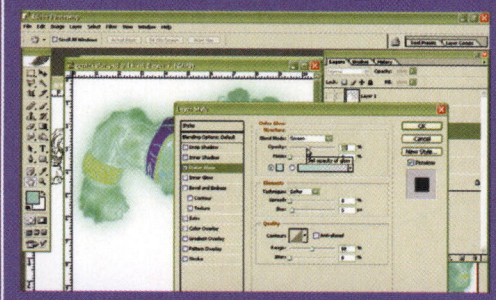
21 Fill selections

To get the light green outline for the figure, I first used the Colour Select command to select the line work for the Genie, and then on a new layer I filled the selection with a light green colour.



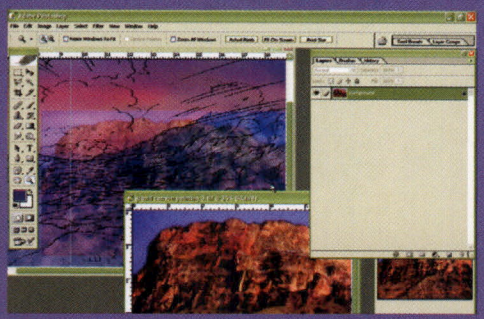
22 Perfect the glow

To make the Genie's eyes blue, repeat the previous steps, but only select the lines surrounding his eyes and fill them with a light blue colour. Then I used an Airbrush with 30 per cent Opacity to colour the Genie in light shades of green. I filled his clothes with flat colours at 60 per cent Opacity. I then applied an Outer Glow layer effect (Layer>Layer Style>Outer Glow) to give him a luminescent look. I further tweaked the effect by adjusting the glow's variables once I transferred the Genie to the final illustration with the other characters.



23 Background source files

I drew, scanned and coloured the background just like I would a character. To give the background a realistic rocky texture, I created a new layer using a copy of a Grand Canyon photograph. I set its layer mode to Soft Light and erased whatever parts of the photograph did not line up with rocks in the illustration.



24 Minimum contrast

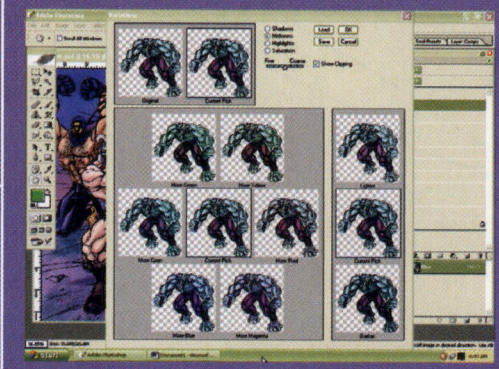
I merged the photo with the background's colour layer and decreased the contrast slightly for the overall background (Image>Adjustments >Brightness>Contrast). It's important to remember you want to keep the contrast in colours on the background at a minimum, especially for a drawing like this where you already have many colours on the characters competing for dominance. Finally, I ran the Paint Daubs filter (Filter>Artistic>Paint Daubs) to give the background a painterly effect.

25 Position your characters

One by one I placed the characters over the background, moving them until I was happy with the positioning. To get the characters onto the background I merged the line work to the colour layer for each character and then dragged and dropped the combined layers onto the background file.

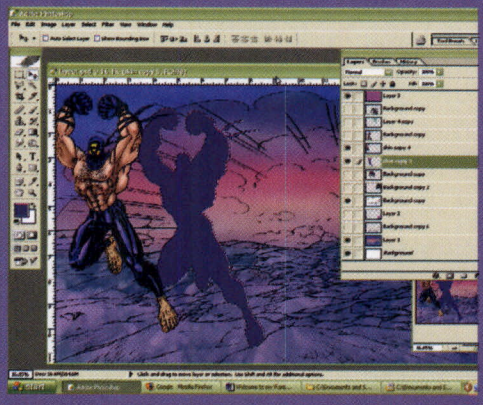
26 Colour adjustment

As the characters were added, I again made use of the Variations options to slightly adjust the overall colouring of the characters. In this instance, the background has a blueish purple overall tone. By adjusting the character's palettes to include a greater percentage of cyan and magenta, they appeared to fit better with their background.



27 Add shadows

Shadows are a great way to really make your figures look like they live in their environment. I created each shadow separately for the characters by first duplicating the character layer and then filling the character's form in this duplicate layer with a dark purple colour. Never use black or grey for your shadows: always choose a cool hue like purple or blue.



28 Gaussian Blur

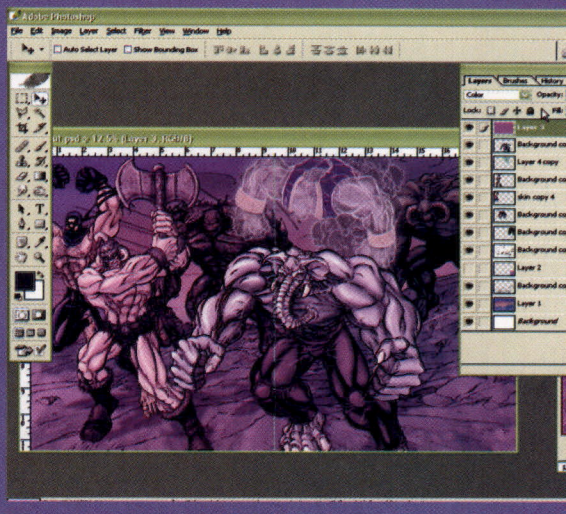
I placed this layer directly under the character layer and, by using the Transform Distort tool (Photoshop>Transform>Distort), I reshaped the mass into a convincing shadow shape on the ground. Finally, I ran the Gaussian Blur filter with a Radius of 12 pixels to soften the shadow's edges.

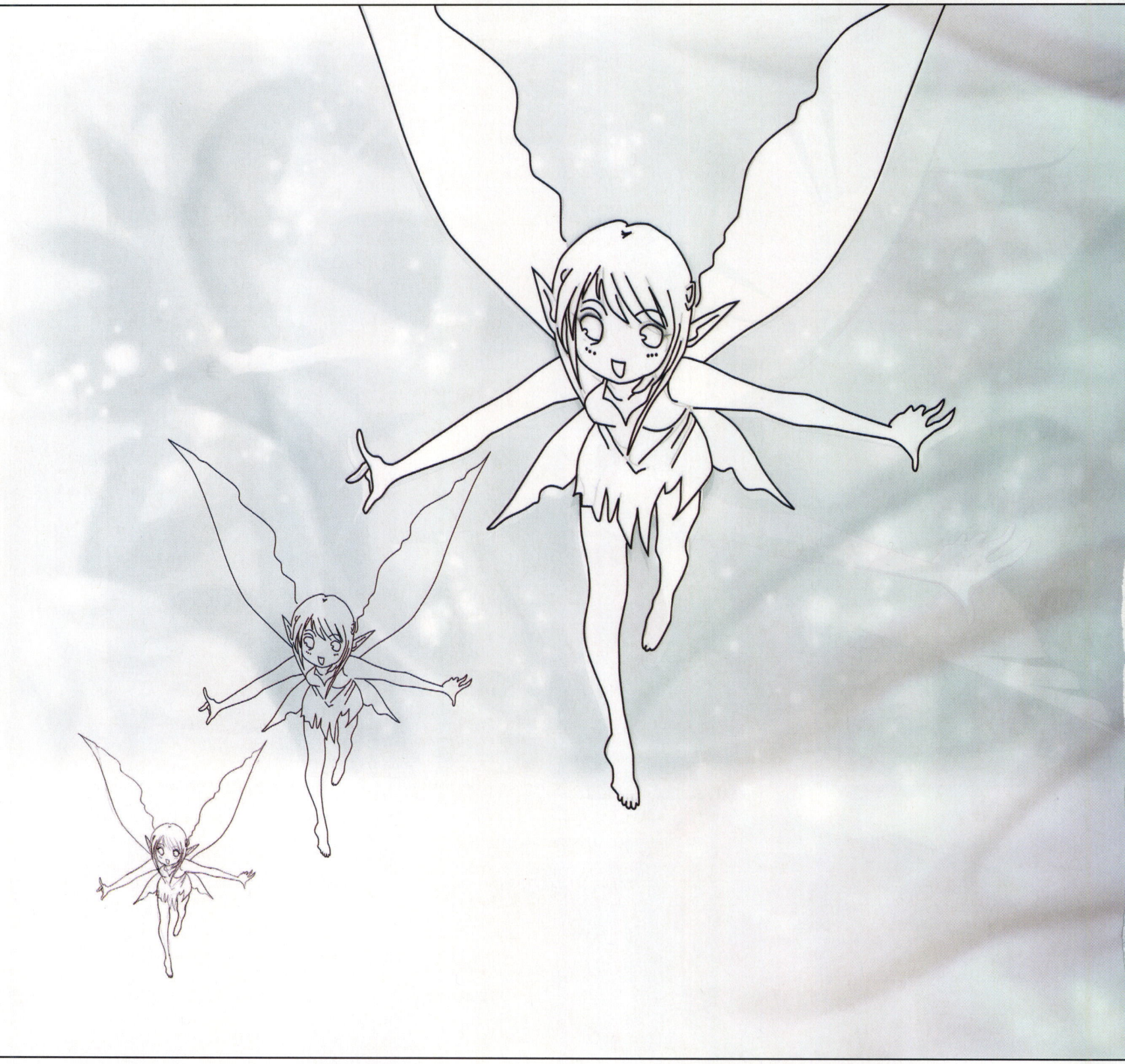
29 Adjust the composition

Because there are so many figures and variables to be mindful of in an illustration of this size, there's sure to be a lot of adjusting and moving before you get all the elements lined up correctly. You should always try to line up figures so they seemed to be moving in a unified direction. When possible, you don't want to have figures cut out of the frame right along a joint, such as at the ankle or elbow, because it will look like the character is missing a limb.

30 Introduce local colour

Local colour is a lighting phenomenon where objects reflect and absorb the colours of the objects around them. The classic example is that if you wear a white shirt into a room with all red walls, it will make your shirt appear pink. Local colour can be added to a scene like this quickly by the addition of a layer placed above all the other layers with the layer mode set to colour. You'll want to fill the layer with the central colour you feel ties all of the characters and the background together. For this piece, I chose a lavender colour. If you have the layer set at 100 per cent Opacity, you should see a monotone rendition of your illustration. For a pleasing local colour effect, you'll want to drop down the Opacity to somewhere between 7–12 per cent. The final step in creating this illustration is to use an Airbrush tool with 15 per cent Opacity to add glows to the eyes and make the axe shine. **ca-p**





Tutorial

[illustration] Melissa Somerville **[e]** messachan@hotmail.com

Draw figures in an anime style

Over the following pages, we're going to cover the basics of drawing your own unique character in an anime-style, incorporating touches to make the character part of a fantasy world. In this case, we're creating a fairy. Since fairies have many human-like qualities, it should be easy to incorporate the anime-style into the drawing.

In addition, we'll show you how to scan your images properly using your home scanner. This means learning about DPI, preparing your image in Adobe *Photoshop* and finding the best ways to ink your sketch to give it a smooth, clean look while beginning to include some colouring. General tips will also be given throughout the tutorial to help you do the best drawing job possible.

Expertise provided by Melissa Somerville. Melissa creates character designs for small projects between friends and computer-coloured anime-style artwork. You can contact her at **[e]** messachan@hotmail.com.

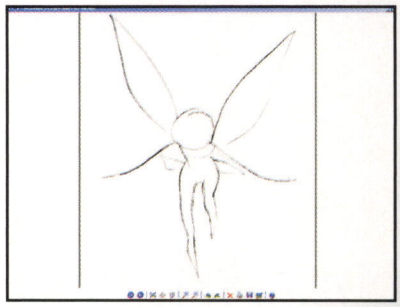
All the components needed to complete this tutorial can be found on the *Computer Arts Projects* CD73 in the Software\Tutorials\Tutorial files\Tutorial files\All\Fantasy fairy folder.

Part 1: Creating the character

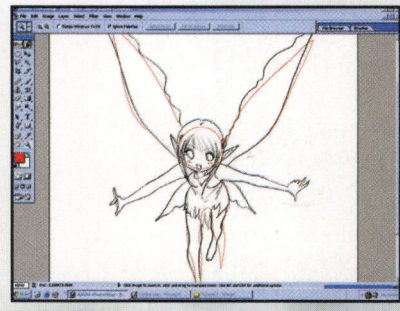
Begin your composition by drawing your character with pencil and paper...

Choosing characteristics

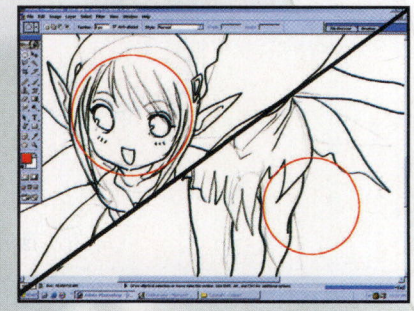
Will your character have long hair? Short hair? Freckles? These details are important, so think carefully and use different combinations to add to your character. Don't overcrowd your figure with too many characteristics at this stage, though, because a lot of their personality will come through when the colour is added.



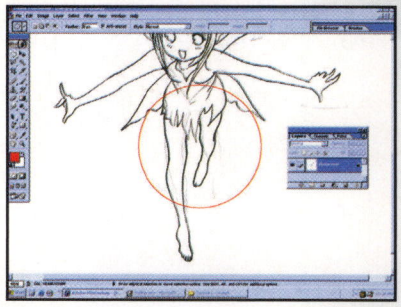
1 Let's start with a basic sketch. This is where you'll plan out the pose of the character. Since we're drawing a fairy, we'll give her a light and feathery pose, along with a plan for two sets of wings which will be added later.



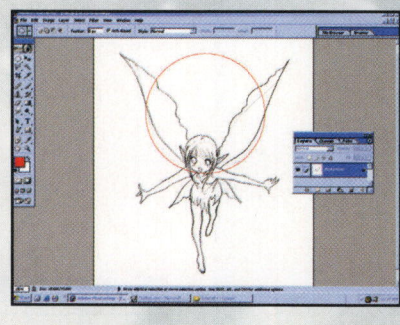
2 The next step is to add the lines of the character and then begin to add some extras to help create originality. In the screenshot above, you'll see where we've outlined the 'plan lines' in red.



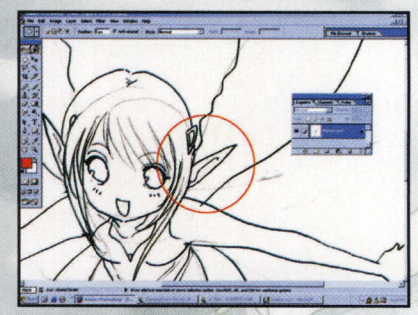
3 Now you need to incorporate the anime-style. One example of this is to make the eyes larger than they would normally be. You should also use smooth, cartoon-like lines. By exaggerating the fairy's proportions a bit and altering the style of drawing, you'll soon give her a slight anime-style.



4 Next, focus on point of view and perspective. The pose of the character means her left leg is further back than her right one, so draw the left leg slightly smaller.



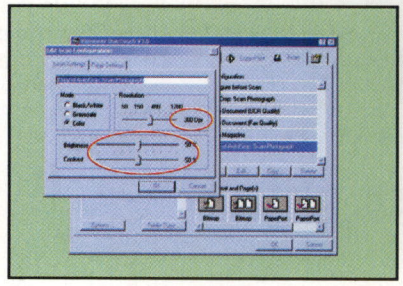
5 Wings can be added to any fantasy creature to make them unique. Simply draw a curve for the base, and then frill the edges of the other side with smaller, quicker curves.



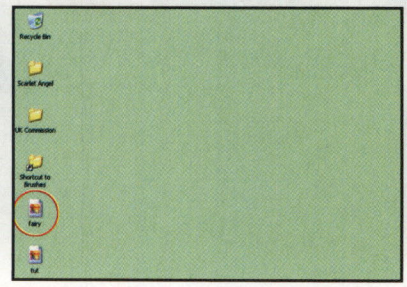
6 Don't forget the ears. If you're focusing on fairies, they tend to have characteristics such as pointy ears. You should also give her thinner limbs to demonstrate her frailness.

Part 2: Scanning your image

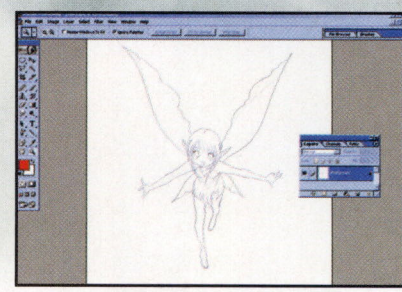
Find out the best way of transferring your drawing on to your computer...



1 Don't worry about your sketch being messy, because you're now going to scan it in and tidy it up. Open the options in your scanner settings, and set your DPI to 300, and your Brightness/Contrast to 50/50. Set it to Colour mode.



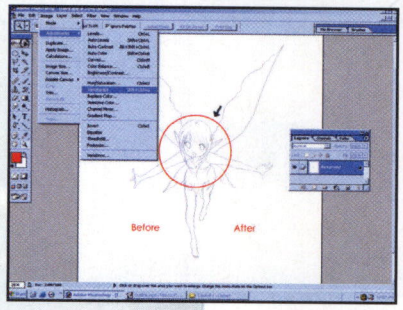
2 Now scan the picture and move the file onto your desktop, where you can reach it easily. Name your file, and make sure it's in JPEG format.



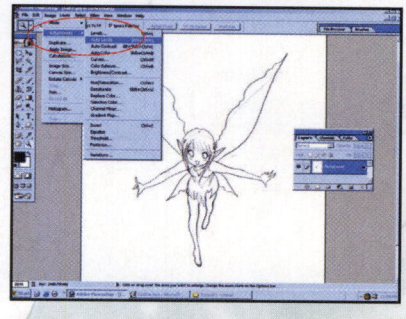
3 Open your file in Adobe *Photoshop*. Whatever you do, don't resize the image. By keeping the image at a larger size, inking it will be easier. The process is long, but the results can be wonderful if you're patient.

Part 3: Preparing your scan

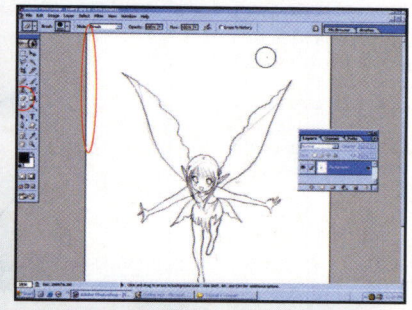
Clean up the image in *Photoshop* before inking the lines...



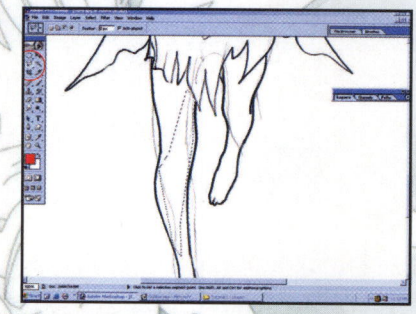
1 At first glance, the line art is messy and light. Go to your top menu bar, and navigate to Image>Adjustments>Desaturate to completely clear out any colour in your image. In other words, make your image black-and-white.



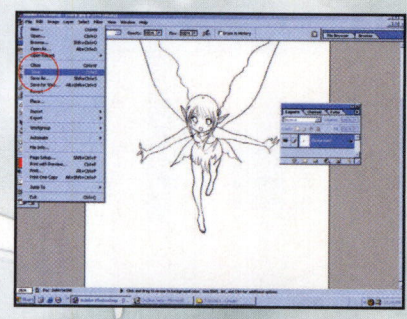
2 Next, go to Image>Adjustments>Auto Levels. This will darken your lines considerably. If your scanned image had a grey background, try messing with Levels instead. This process will also show the 'plan lines' that you started out with.



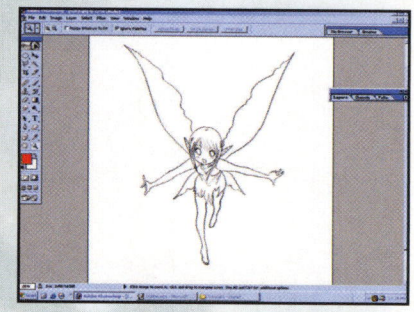
3 It's time to clean up the image. Grab the Eraser tool, hit D on the keyboard and begin erasing any visible messy lines at 50 or 100 per cent view. You don't have to clean it all. If you make a mistake, press Ctrl/Cmnd+Z to undo.



4 Another way to erase the messy lines is to use your Polygonal Lasso tool. With your mouse, trace the area of the line you wish to erase simply by multiple clicking, then click the delete button.



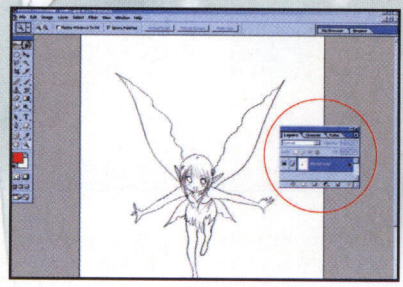
5 It takes some time to clean up the entire image, so be patient – you'll be rewarded in the end. Also make sure you save often, so you don't lose any of this time-consuming work.



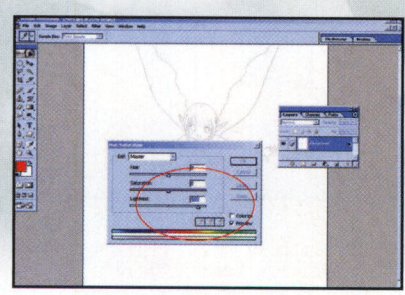
6 This is what the image should look like up to this point. Notice how the messy lines are gone. If you're not satisfied, keep going until it's perfect. Practice and patience is the only way to improve your results.

Part 4: Inking

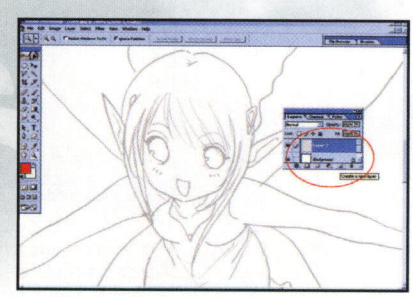
Now you need to start adding colour to your smooth lines...



1 Open up your Layers palette. If you can't see the palette, go to Window>Layers. At this stage, you should only have one layer: Background.



2 Go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. Slide the Lightness bar over to the right until the image is a fairly light shade of grey. By having it light, it won't show through as much. Click OK and open your Layers palette again.

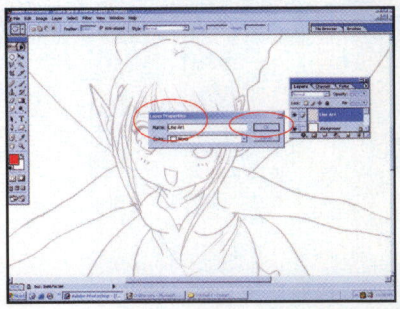


3 Click on the button at the bottom of your Layers palette that looks like a sheet of paper with a folded corner. This will create a new layer. You can also click on Layer>New>Layer. Make sure you're working on your image at 100 per cent.

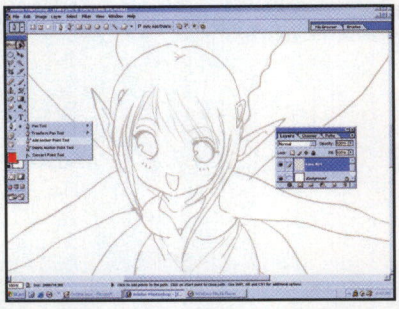
Inking continued...

Pen tool techniques

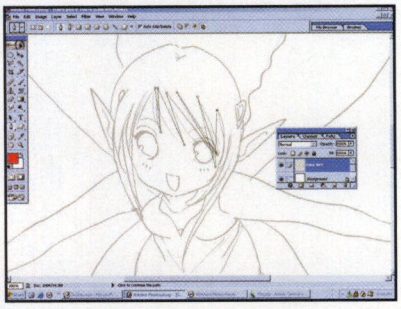
The Pen tool is a magical tool if you know what you're doing with it. You can use it to add anchor points on your 'line' to create more detail. It can be a time-consuming process but it's very effective in the long run.



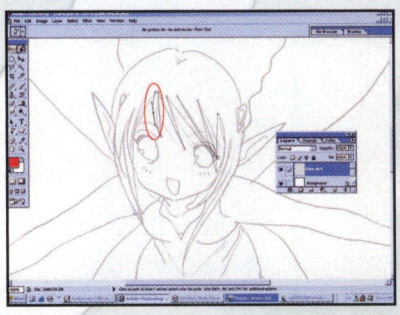
4 Rename your Layer 1 by right-clicking and selecting Layer Properties. Type in the new name, Line Art, and click OK. Once you save, make sure your file changes to the PSD format for Adobe *Photoshop*.



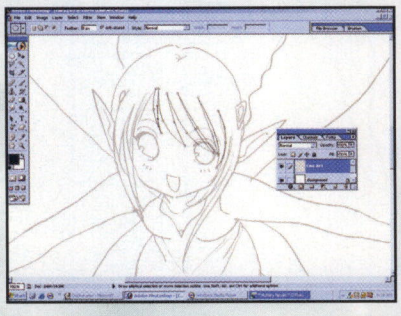
5 Click on the Pen tool. This tool can be wonderful and frustrating at the same time. Another useful tool is the Add Anchor Point tool, which can be found when you right-click/Ctrl-click on the Pen tool.



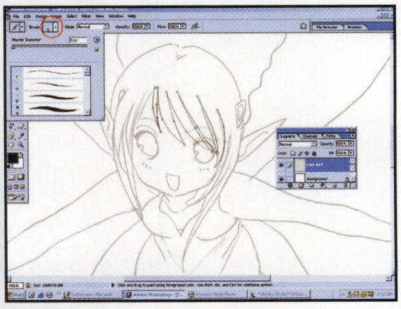
6 Make sure you have your Pen tool activated. Begin somewhere on the drawing by clicking on basic points. Here, we're starting on the head. Don't worry about curves for now, but don't do too many points all at once.



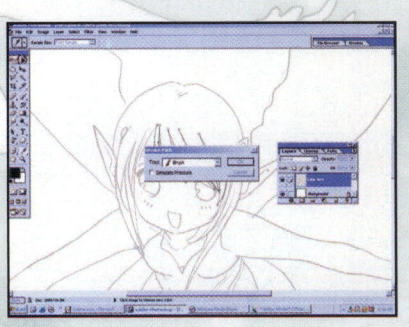
7 Click on the Add Anchor Point tool and click in the middle of the line. Drag the line to fit it with the sketch underneath. See how smooth the curve of the line is? It doesn't have to be perfect, but it's a good idea to make it fit pretty closely.



8 Repeat the last step with the rest of the lines: use the Add Anchor Point tool and drag the line. When you're finished, click D on your keyboard to make sure your colours are black-and-white.

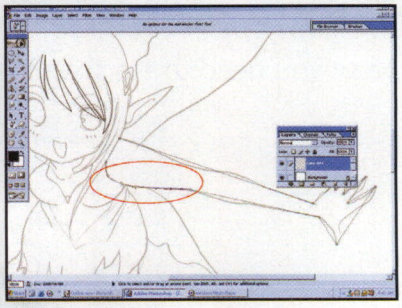


9 Go to your brushes by clicking on the Brush tool. Then click on the upper box with the dropdown arrow. Your brushes should be on the default set. If not, click on the next arrow you see (not the scroll bar), and reset your brushes.



10 Set your brush to the first one on the list and go back to your Add Anchor Point tool. Move your mouse over to the lines you made and right-click/Ctrl-click. Select Stroke Path. Set your tool on Brush and click OK.

11 Right-click/Ctrl-click again and select Delete Path. The point of the Pen tool is to create really smooth lines. Now choose a longer part of the body, such as the arm. Set your basic lines with the Pen tool again.



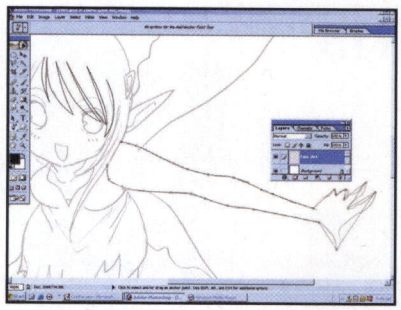
12 Add your anchor points. This time you're going to have to use more than one to fit the lines to your sketch, because using one won't normally fit such a big area perfectly. Add another point where it's needed near the first one, and drag the line over to the sketch line.

Part 5: Perfecting your lines

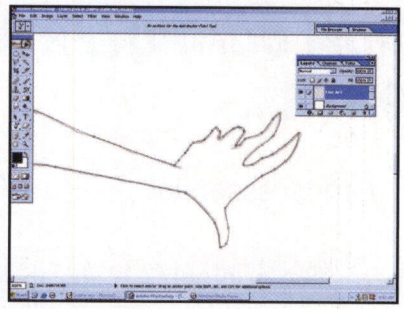
Finish inking the rest of your lines and merge all the layers...

Using Hue/Saturation

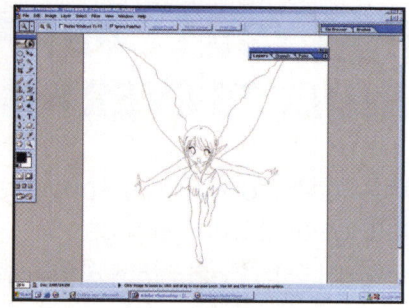
With Hue/Saturation, the hue is the colour you want to use, and Saturation is how much of that colour you want in it. The further the slider is to the left, the paler the colour will be; and to the right, the more the colour will appear. Lightness is the shade or highlight of the colour. With black, you'll normally have to drag that to the right to see your colours.



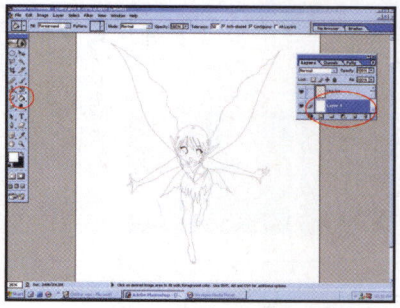
1 Finish the rest of the basic lines, adding anchor points where they're needed. When you reach the fingers on your arm, if you're starting with the arm, stop and go on to the next step.



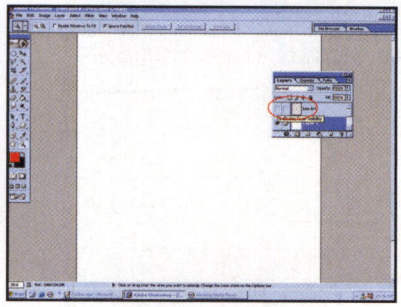
2 Now you need to ink some fingers. Since fingers are a lot smaller and have way more curves than you could possibly imagine, you'll be using a lot of anchor points. Again, the path needs to be fairly close to the sketch.



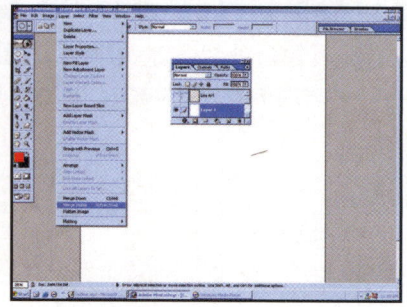
3 Right-click/Ctrl-click, hit Stroke to stroke your path, then right-click/Ctrl-click again and delete your path. How does it look? Finish it off by continuing those same steps throughout the entire sketch. This will take a while, but, again, patience will pay off.



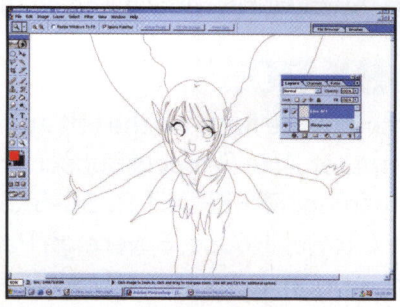
4 Once you're finished, add a new layer between the Background layer and the Line Art layer. Click on the Paint Bucket tool and fill in the layer with white. This erases the sketch lines underneath.



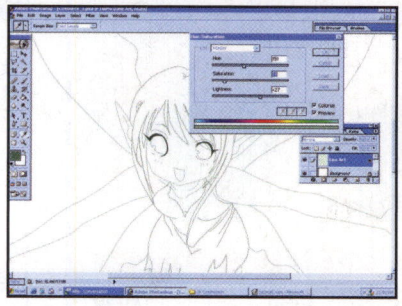
5 Next, go to your Layers palette window and click on the eye square next to the Line Art layer. The eye will disappear, and it should make your black lines disappear as well. It simply hides that layer so you can focus on something else in the picture.



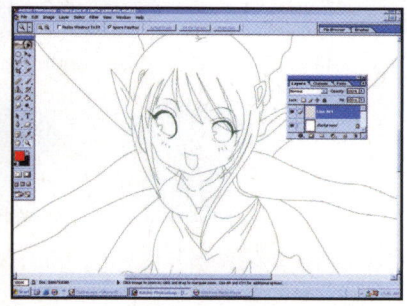
6 Go to Layer>Merge Visible at the top menu. This will flatten the layers that aren't hidden like the ones you hid in the previous step. It will leave you with the background layer as a simple white layer, with your hidden line art on top.



7 Click on your Line Art layer to make it appear again. Is it satisfactory? Do the lines seem smooth enough? The Pen tool's clean lines make the colouring process a lot easier. Your picture, overall, comes out much better with amazing quality.



8 Make sure your Line Art layer is selected (by simply clicking on it), then go to Image> Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. Click the box labelled 'Colourise' and 'Preview'. Adjust the bars to achieve a certain hue to your line art.



9 Here, we've used a teal-green hue to match the picture. You can change this later on if you wish. The sketch is now finished and ready for colouring. Turn to page 38 to find out how to finish your illustration. ca-p

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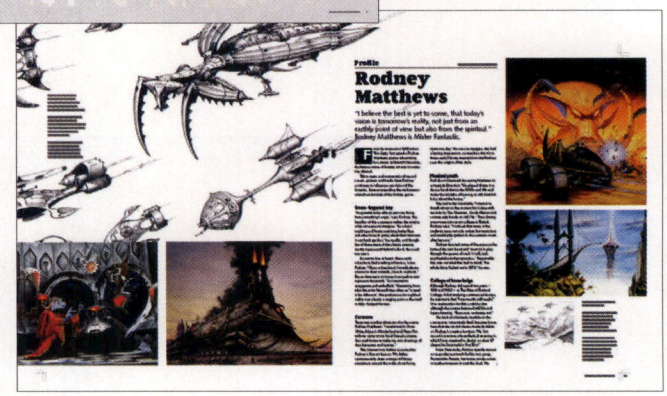

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Tutorial

[illustration] Melissa Somerville **[e]** messachan@hotmail.com

Colour your fantasy figures

Having drawn and inked your fantasy figure in the previous tutorial on pages 30 to 35, you now need to think about colouring it. We'll show you the basics of using your Layers palette, as well as talk you through how to use some tools in your Tools palette, such as the Polygonal Lasso and the Elliptical Marquee.

We'll also show you how to cell-shade (colour using hard-edged shading techniques) your character while adding in a detailed background to situate your fantasy character in its own unique environment. The way colours are used in this tutorial is not only pleasing to the eye, but also brings everything together to create an effective composition.

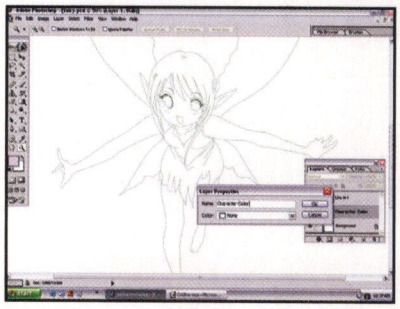
Finally, you'll learn how to add in effects such as shadows and sparkles, which will turn your work into a polished composition that's worthy of publication.

Expertise provided by Melissa Somerville. Melissa creates character designs for small projects between friends and computer-coloured anime-style artwork. You can contact her at **[e]** messachan@hotmail.com.

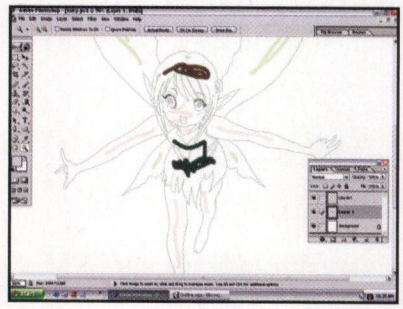
All the components needed to complete this tutorial can be found on the *Computer Arts Projects* CD73 in the Software\Tutorials\Tutorial files\Tutorial files\All\Fantasy fairy folder.

Part 1: Colour planning

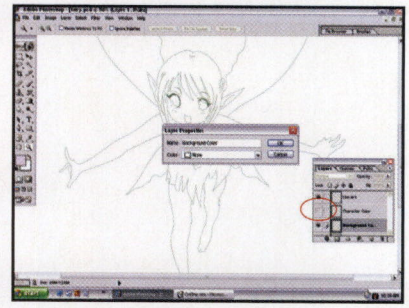
Start by coming up with some different colour and composition ideas...



1 First, think about colours. Click on the background layer in your Layers palette and then make a new layer and name it 'Character Colour'. This will enable you to colour under your line art later on.



2 Consider what type of skin tone and hair colour you want to give your character. Move around the picture using a circular brush to add little blotches of colour that you plan to use. Zoom out to do this. Also, don't worry about details just yet, because you can add them later.



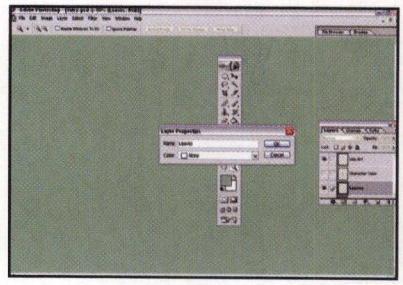
3 Start with the background. Hide your current layer by clicking on the eyeball and making a new layer. Name that 'Background Colour' and drag it underneath the 'Character Colour' layer. This is where the beginning of your background will go.

Part 2: Background basics

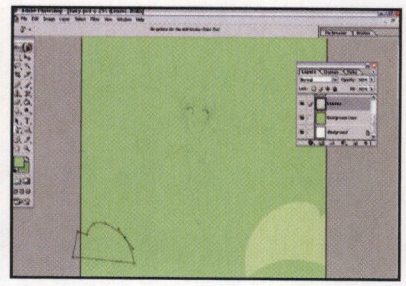
In this section, we'll begin to create an environment for the character to inhabit...

Background considerations

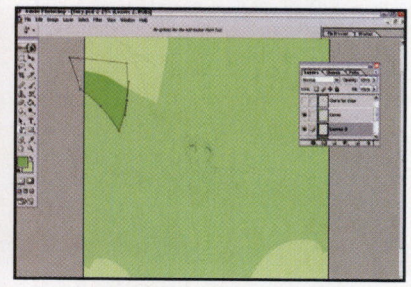
Backgrounds really help with the composition of a picture – whether you're adding a nature-type background or one loaded with brushes from your favourite artist. A lot of artists just throw on colours everywhere, add brushes in random spots, and expect the image to look nice. While some people enjoy abstract art like that, it's nice to have something a bit more considered.



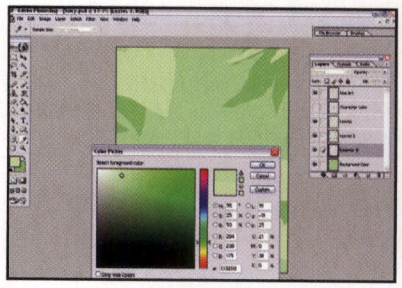
1 Select the Paint Bucket tool in your Tools palette and fill the 'Background Colour' layer with a green hue. Create a new layer above it and name it 'Leaves'. This is where we'll be adding leaves to the background.



2 Begin to add some leaves. Alternate using colours lighter and darker than the background to give a sense of perspective to the environment. You could change the background colour and use the Pen tool to make the leaves.

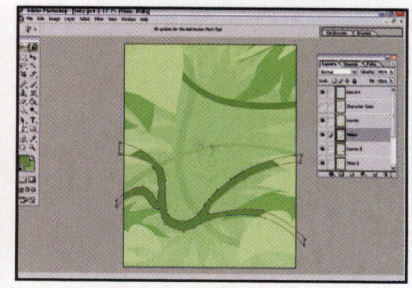


3 To add leaves underneath the existing ones, we're going to make a new layer under the 'Leaves' layer. Call this 'Leaves 2' and put darker coloured leaves on it so that they appear underneath the lighter-coloured leaves.



4 Next, make a new layer with another set of leaves. Name this 'Leaves 3'. Begin to mesh the colours into the background by choosing shades of green that are relatively close to the background colour you used.

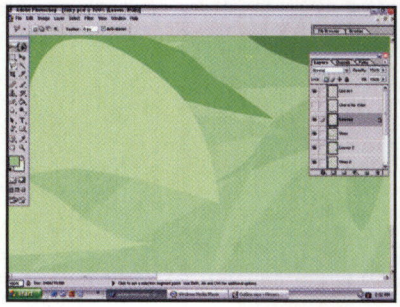
5 Now add some vines to give it that jungle-type appearance. Make a new layer between the layers 'Leaves 3' and 'Leaves 2'. Also make one between layers 'Leaves 2' and 'Leaves'. Name these layers 'Vines' and 'Vines 2'.



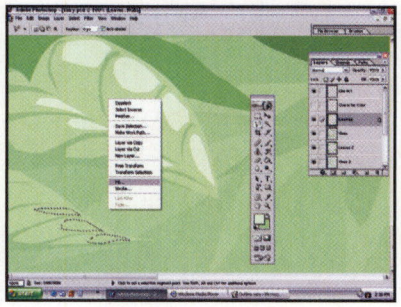
6 Begin adding your vines. Here, we're going to make them intersect on both layers. For 'Vines 2', we're using a colour a bit darker than the main background colour. For 'Vines', we'll be making the colour even darker.

Part 3: Detailing the background

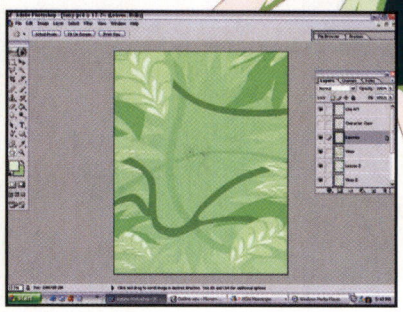
Add some details that will increase the perspective of the piece...



1 Begin by clicking on the 'Leaves' layer. Zooming in to around 100 per cent, use the Polygonal Lasso tool to add details such as shading and highlighting. To stay on that layer only, go to your Layers palette and select Lock. Click on the transparent box to lock your transparency.

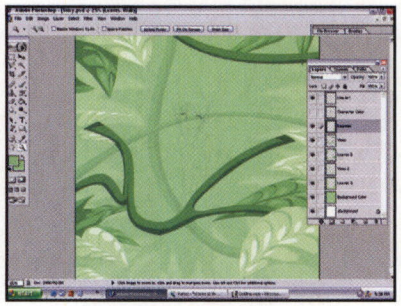


2 With the Polygonal Lasso tool, select the area you want to shade or highlight. When you're done 'connecting the lines', right-click/Ctrl-click on the area and select Fill. This will fill your selected area with your foreground colour.

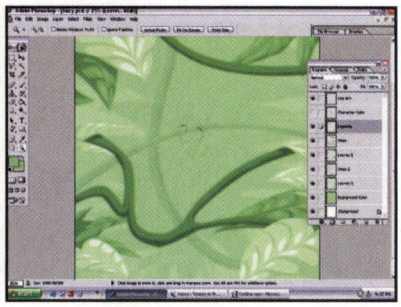


3 Continue this throughout the layer. Always keep the light source constant within your work. It's good to have an idea of where your light source is going to be so you can decide where to put the shades more easily instead of throwing them in a random spot.

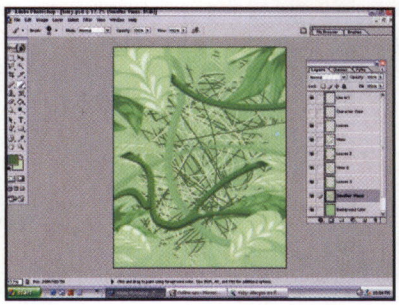
4 Do the same thing to the next layer of leaves. This will help build onto the background. It may look messy now, but it'll be worth it in the end. Once you're done, finish the rest of the Leaves and Vines layers except for the 'Leaves 3' layer.



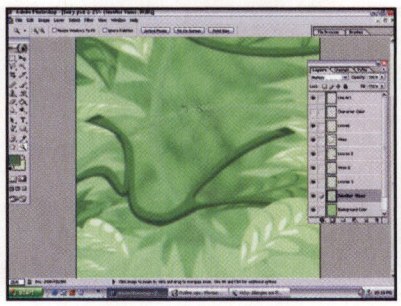
5 When you reach the 'Leaves 3' layer, don't shade and highlight it. Instead, go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set it to 12 pixels. By blurring the background, you'll move the focus away from it.



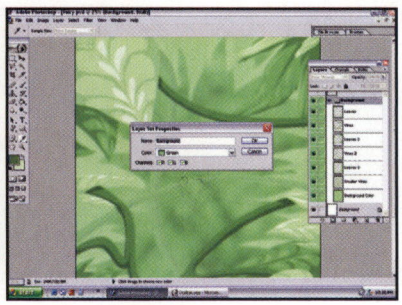
6 Next, Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur the layers 'Vines 2', 'Leaves 2' and 'Vines' at 9 pixels. 'Leaves' should be done in the same way, only with 6 pixels instead. This also helps with de-emphasising the background, making the viewer focus more on the character.



7 Click on the 'Background Colour' layer and create a new layer above it and name it 'Smaller Vines'. Next choose two colours that greatly contrast the shade of that background colour: one light and one dark. Set your brush to 15 pixels and go crazy!



8 Gaussian Blur this layer as well, but this time set it to 50 pixels. Then set the layer mode to Multiply. This makes all the white in the layer disappear and flattens the rest of the colours into the layers underneath.



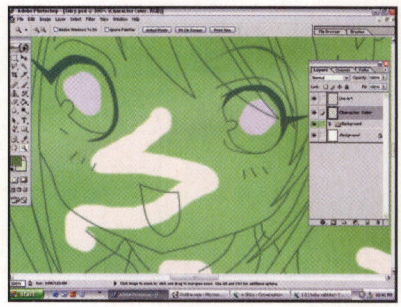
9 Before you start colouring the character, group the background files into a folder. At the bottom of your Layers palette, click on the folder-like button. Rename it by right-clicking/Ctrl-clicking and selecting Layer Set Properties. We named it 'Background' and made the Layer Set colour green. Drag all of your background layers underneath the Layer Set divider.

Part 4: Colouring the character

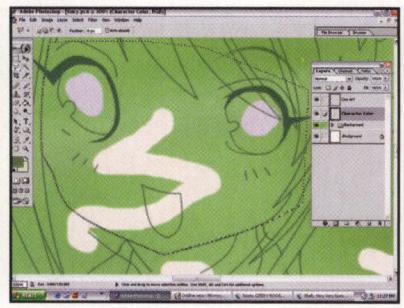
Begin to add basic colours to your character to bring her to life...

Resizing images

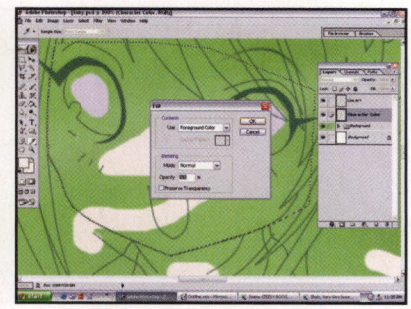
If you want to save computer memory, simply resize your image. Keeping your image at a large resolution (or size) gives you more detail and accuracy, especially in the early stages of inking. When you resize, it compresses some of the details, but gives you a better overall view of the image.



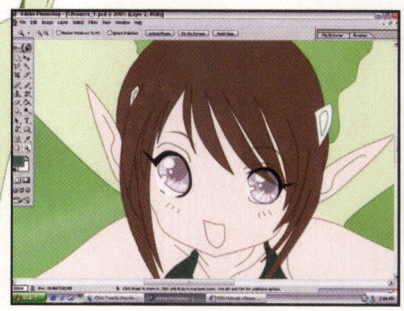
1 Let's begin with skin tones. It's a good idea to pick lighter colours for the character first so you can then go over them with darker colours. Make sure you're viewing your image at 100 per cent or more, and click on the Polygonal Lasso tool.



2 Begin to select the area that you want to colour. This is kind of like tracing along the lines. You can relax doing this type of thing because it's easy to stay on the lines.

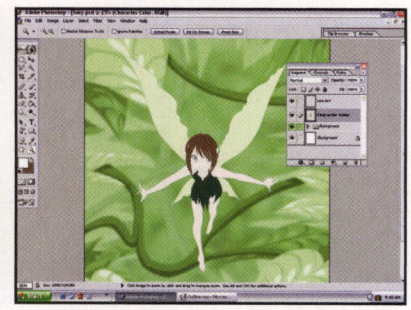


3 Right-click/Ctrl-click the selection and click on Fill. This will show you your properties. Just click OK and it will fill your selection with the foreground colour you've chosen. This is quite a lot quicker than manually colouring with a brush.

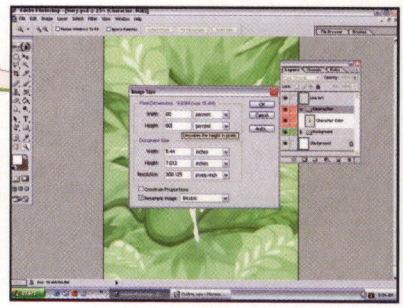


4 Repeat this step with the rest of the character by filling in all the base colours. Make sure you keep the colours subtle – you don't want to blind the viewer. This will take a few minutes, but be patient.

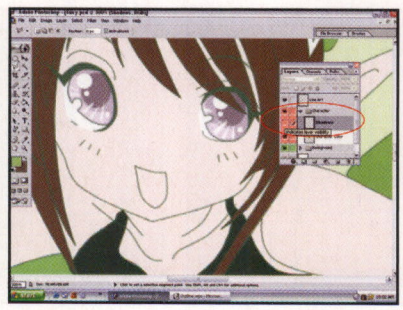
5 If you ever colour outside the lines by accident, just select the area outside the line and click the delete button.



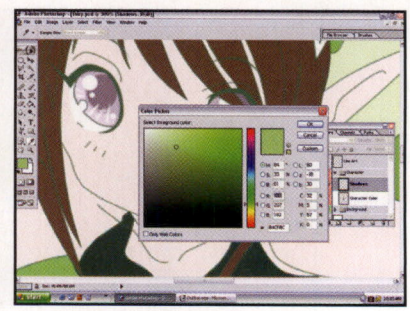
6 Create another Layer Set for the character. Drag all of the layers pertaining to the character (except for the background and the line art) and set it to a colour other than the Background Layer Set. Name this 'Character'.



7 Here, we're going to resize the picture slightly. Go to Image>Image Size. Set both your Width and Height to 80 per cent. Then click OK. You'll need to resize your image if it's slowing down your computer.



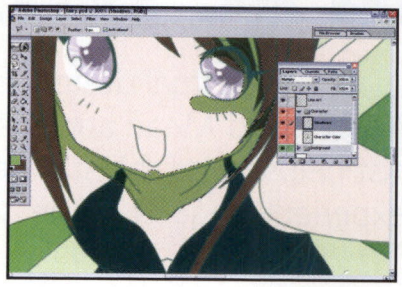
8 Click on your 'Character Colour' layer under the 'Character' Layer Set menu. Create a new layer above it and name it 'Shadows'. This is where your shadows will go. Set the layer to Multiply. This will bring down that shade onto your colours.



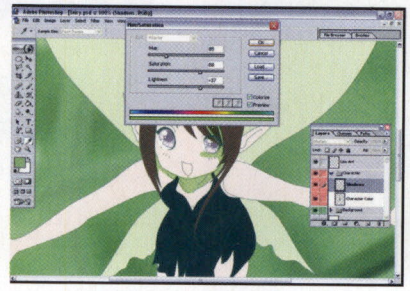
9 Zoom in to 100 to 200 per cent of your image and choose a green shade for the foreground colour. This is going to blend into your colours on previous layers and make them a darker colour with tints of whatever new colour you choose.

Part 5: Shading the character

In this section, we show you how to add shadows to the character...



1 Begin the process of selecting the area of the shadow with the Polygonal Lasso tool. Remember to keep the light source constant. Here, the light is coming from the top because of the sun, which comes through other imaginary leaves.



2 Finish the rest of your character in the same way. You can always change your shading colour by going to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. We're going to keep a green shade to retain the green tone of the image.

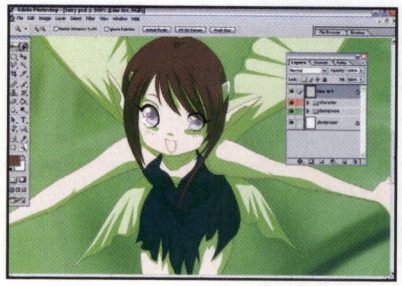
3 Since the wings are drawn like frills, we're going to shade them like frills. Every time you see a bend or a curve outwards, shade a crease. It's like shading folds in clothing.

Part 6: Finishing touches

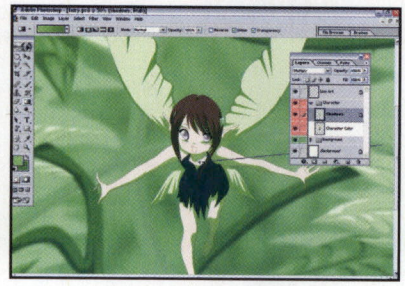
Add the final elements to complete your fantasy fairy composition...

Copyright

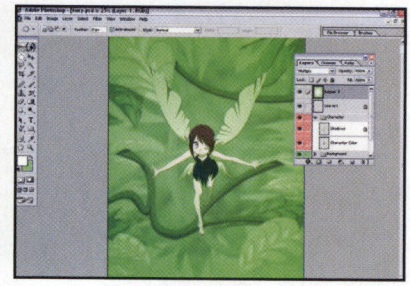
Once you've finished your image, we suggest adding in a small text layer with your name and signature on it so people know it's your work. Also, if you want to make the image smaller, you can resize it and crop off the edges a bit to give your character more focus.



1 Now let's change the line art. Click on the 'Line Art' layer and lock the transparency by clicking the transparency box. Take the brush, set it to 100 pixels or less, and begin to colour the line art according to the picture.

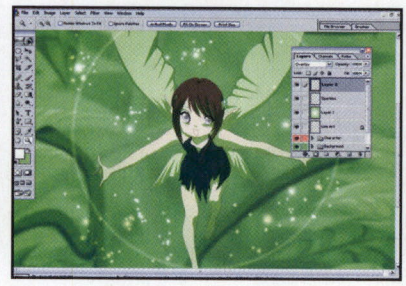


2 Click on your 'Shadows' layer and lock transparency. Find the same colour you used with your shadows and pick a lighter shade (or darker shade) as the background colour. Click on your Gradient tool. Set the gradient to the circle-type and drag the mouse in the direction where the lighter shade is in the centre.

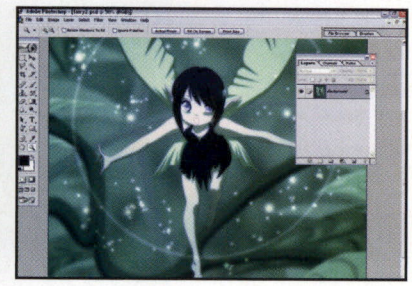


3 Create a new layer above your other layers and repeat the previous step but with your lighter shade as the dark shade, and your darker shade being replaced by white. White is still in the middle. Set it to Multiply.

4 Add a new layer above that one and name it 'Sparkles'. Find your soft-edged brush and begin dabbing little white dots around the fairy. Use large ones first, then add smaller ones beside the larger white dots. Set the layer to Overlay.



5 Create one more new layer and click on your Elliptical Marquee tool. Make a circle selection around your fairy (hold Shift to keep the perfect circle shape), right-click/Ctrl-click, and stroke it with white at 3-5 pixels. Gaussian Blur the layer at 6 pixels and set the layer to Overlay.



6 Flatten your layers (Layer>Flatten Image). Duplicate the final layer and set the duplicated later on Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. Click Colourise, and select a hue. Click OK and Gaussian Blur the image at 6 pixels. Finally, set the duplicated layer to Hard Light and flatten it. cap

Profile [w] www.ghull.com

George Hull

Having trained in industrial design, but inspired by the likes of Giger, Syd Mead and Joe Johnston, this concept artist helps turn fantastic ideas into major cinematic experiences, such as the *Matrix* films…

Movies. If you've watched any over the last decade – or even if you've only seen some of the ensuing merchandise – chances are you've come across something created by George Hull. As a visual development artist, he produced early artwork for the directors of *Finding Nemo*, at Pixar. While at Industrial Light and Magic, in the roles of Visual Effects Director and Concept Artist, he contributed to *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*, *Mission: Impossible* and *Jumanji*, among others. And you could also say he was the architect behind the techno-mythological worlds conjured up in *Matrix: Reloaded* and *Matrix: Revolutions*.

These latter two films are certainly the most important work of his career so far. As the Wachowski brothers were working on the scripts from Chicago, George was helping with the development of the visuals from his home in San Francisco. Later, he headed down to Los Angeles to join the production designer on the films, Owen Patterson, and a team of designers. They created the storyboarding and pre-visualisation. In all, George spent four years working on the films and his role evolved from Conceptual Designer to Visual Effects Art Director. From the cavernous underworld of Morpheus and his tribe of free humans, to the *Matrix*-controlled surface world, what we saw was very much based on George's designs and artwork.

Dream project

Working on the *Matrix* movies was clearly a job he loved. "After seeing the first *Matrix* film, I was intrigued by the possibility of working on the sequels. Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* inspired me at an early age," he says. "As a fan of adult science fiction, working on the *Matrix* films was a dream project. My favourite films are ones that offer new ideas and challenge the imagination. With such high concepts and unique mythology, I was honoured to help the directors illustrate their scripts into drawings and paintings."

Aside from the world, settings and characters he helped design, what was unique about the *Matrix* experience for George was the opportunity he got to work within both the pre-production and post-

Above: A wide view of the entire power plant of Machine City in *The Matrix*. "To show the immense scale the directors wanted, I composed the foreground with harvesters in the foetus fields diminishing towards the horizon – then juxtaposed with the towering columns of the power plant," says George.

Right: "The directors asked me to imagine three electrical cables that could carry the power of an entire civilisation. The power plant would generate the electricity from the humans and carry it to Machine City." George has always liked films that challenge the imagination.

All images courtesy of Warner Brothers/Eon Entertainment.

production processes for the films. During his time at ILM, he worked on films as varied as *Forrest Gump*, *Disclosure*, *Jumanji*, *Mission: Impossible* and *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*. However, this was always in a post-production capacity. "We would typically receive films that had been 75 to 95 per cent designed already," he explains. "I would spend most of my time in meetings and reviewing visual effects shots, and just a little producing artwork."

When he had the chance to work with the directors on the very initial stages of the development of the *Matrix: Reloaded* and *Revolutions*, George was elated. "I was able to draw and paint almost 100 per cent of the time," he adds.

Finding Nemo is another major film on George's CV. The animation company Pixar (*Toy Story*, *Monsters, Inc.* and *The Incredibles*) leads the way in visual style and production design. On *Nemo*, George contributed to the film at a very early stage as a concept artist, giving a direction to its look and feel before it had even begun as a production. No-one else was even working on the picture and the director needed to start thinking about how to present the underwater setting.

"I got the chance to jump in on that with a fresh canvas and I really enjoyed the challenge of depicting beautiful underwater imagery and scenery," says George. "Before *Finding Nemo*, most digital features didn't have a lot of mood. They had a lot of colours and all looked very plasticky. There was no subtlety in light and depth and atmospherics. All this stuff I put into my *Finding Nemo* artwork. I was trying to say, 'In an ideal world it would be great to see a film that's really dramatic, with underwater lighting and shafts of light.' Did I influence that in the final product? I think so?"

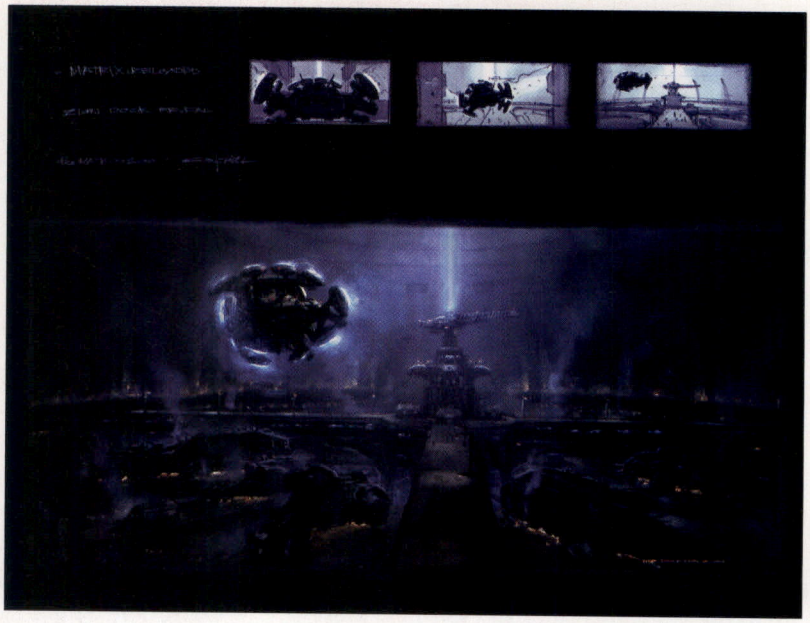
Design background

Having trained in industrial design in Cincinnati, George was never a typical fantasy artist in his approach, nor was he a digital artist. He spent several internships during his education and worked, among other things, on vehicle design in the automotive industry. He's a pencil and

Left: After Neo dies, this machine carries him away.

Below: "I try to design a composition from left to right with strong diagonals. The challenge is how to lead the eye back into the middle. I designed the twisting serpent image using this approach."

Bottom: The Sentinal Hive. "This was the very first painting I did for the films," says George.



sketchpad man who has migrated to the computer in order to speed up aspects of his work. After deciding a year from the end of his industrial design course that film was his passion, he went for an internship at ILM and later landed a job as a storyboard artist.

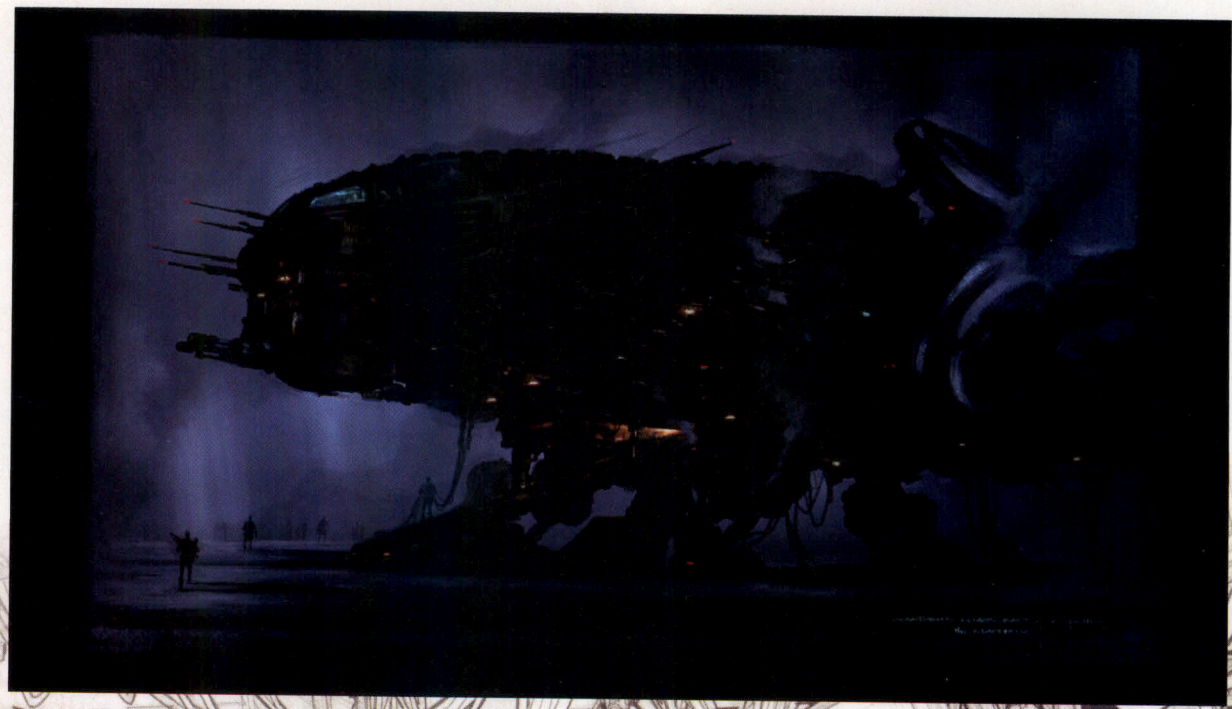
"When I moved to the film industry I had to learn how to draw set designs and it was always with coloured pencils and markers and pastels. It was quite a laboured process and the changes were really hard to do. After you had an illustration made, the director would go: 'Oh well, what if the scene was actually not so cool, it was actually more green.' You'd have to do the whole illustration again. As soon as *Photoshop* was handy enough I found that my speed in doing illustrations was at least twice as fast as it made changes for the production environment immensely more easy," he says.

These days George still draws almost everything and then scans it in and colours it in *Photoshop*. He also uses *Painter*, and a piece of software called *SketchUp*, for rough

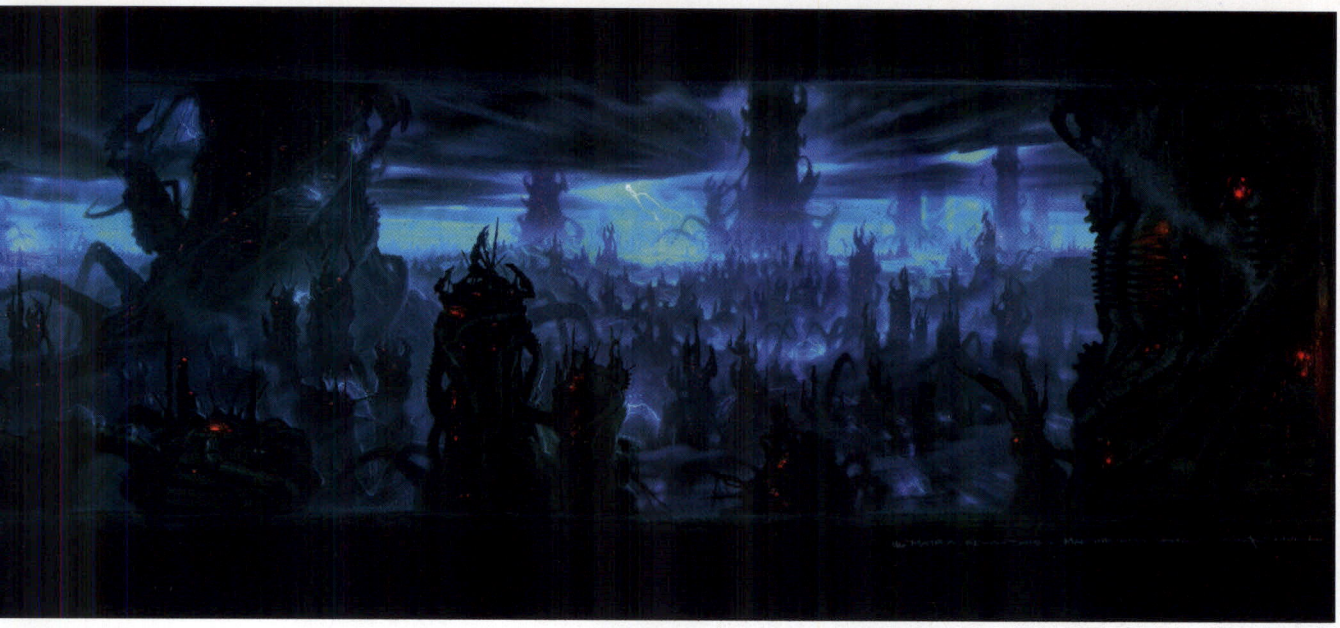
Above: "The directors were very sad to cut this scene," begins George. "The character was called The Keep. It was a mech guardian of Machine City, designed by Geof Darrow. I painted it up to be a dark, scary obstacle that Neo had to fight before reaching the Mech city."

Above right: The Nebuchadnezzar heads towards the hovercraft docking bay of Zion.

Right: "I painted this to help define the colour and atmosphere of the Zion dock: cool blue grey with amber and red pin lights, lots of industrial activity and steam. This is my favourite painting oddly enough," says George.



All images courtesy of Warner Brothers/Eon Entertainment.



Left: "The grand panoramic of Machine City was a difficult challenge," says George. "I imagined that a civilisation of machines would not use buildings as humans do. Since they wouldn't have as much need for shelter, perhaps these buildings could be creatures themselves. I pictured a forest of ant hills with their organic architecture being made up of living creatures. This led to the depiction of giant towers with squid-like tentacle arms – massive living cranes that were continually expanding the machine empire. Besides making a scene look dramatic, a concept artist should always try to elaborate on the ideas as well. They don't always get used, but it is an important part of the creative process."

3D models. Filters aren't normally part of his palette, and he prefers to see artists finding their own stylisation rather than applying ready-made effects.

The sketchpad remains the focus of his creativity, and it's here that most of his advice to young artists is concentrated. First, he advises that you keep a sketchbook and do casual, half-hour sketches every day. Second, in his industry, where fantasies need to be turned into something the director can work from, speed is a key. The sketchbook is the place to demonstrate this and is a great back-up to a portfolio of more finished work.

"If you have a sketchbook to show you can work fast and spontaneously, you will have a great advantage. Another lesson I use is this: while watching a film, press pause and spend the few minutes drawing the scene. Use only the time the VCR or DVD holds before automatically starting up again. This will force you to be quick and not get too tight," he says. ca-p

Art direction advice

George Hull reveals his thought process when approaching an image, taking into account the computer application as the medium to create it.

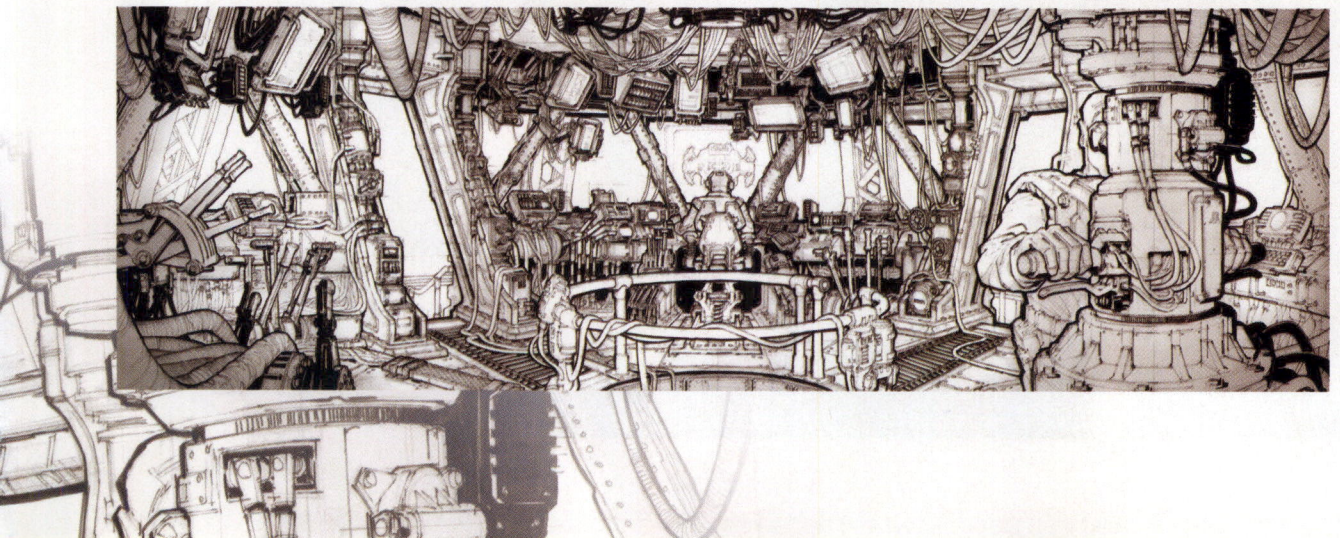
"I like images that can be bold enough to make the point in a few seconds, yet subtle enough to have depth and emotion. I go through a process when providing art direction which helps people clearly decipher the qualities of strong imagery. It revolves around three basic ideas:

1) Knowing the essential controlling idea of a shot.

2) Deciding on the focal point which will express that idea easily.

3) Designing everything in the colour, lighting and value composition to support that idea.

"With complex ideas this can be much harder than it seems. However, attention paid to these steps can be the difference between dramatic, captivating imagery, and a muddy composite of great detail but poor design. Computer graphics are inherently noisy with detail, so this is incredibly important in visual effects. CG artists can learn substantially from practising traditional painting."



Above left: The hovercraft Mjolnir crashes into the dock in the final chapter of *Revolutions*.

Left: "To do this drawing I had to piece several pieces of paper together, which ended up being about four feet across! It was very useful when the set department had to build the room full size. I even drew small people running around the chaos of cables and levers, but hardly anyone noticed," says George.

Feature

The art of gaming

We're bombarded with the kind of fantasy art we see on the boxes of games such as *Fable* and *Sudeki*, but how easy is it to create those images and what processes did the artists behind them go through?

Walk into your average High Street games shop and the first thing you're going to notice is the shelves and shelves of packaging. These range from in-store displays to point of sale and posters to the humble game boxes themselves. The games business today is a multi-million part of the wider entertainment industry and with the development of titles such as *Doom 3*, *Fable* and *Jade Empire* taking years and costing more money than you can shake a stick at, one thing's for sure: the packaging is very, very important.

As games have evolved over the past ten years from a cottage industry to a multi-billion dollar powerhouse, the way the development companies have gone about selling their wares has also changed. The sub-Roger Dean wizards and goblins of the early days have been replaced by something far more sophisticated and, even where wizards and goblins are still important, the way they're presented is a world away from the packaging designs of the early 1990s.

The global games industry was worth in excess of $30bn in 2004 and for every runaway success such as *Grand Theft Auto*, *Halo 2* or *Spider-Man* there were innumerable flops. If you talk to some in the industry, one of the main factors behind those less successful releases was failing in the packaging concepts. So how important is this make-or-break factor and how does the process of bringing those games to market work, especially in the crowded and difficult-to-judge area of fantasy art?

Powerful packaging

Two of the big successes of 2004 with a strong fantasy art feel have been Lionhead's

Right: The packaging for *Sudeki* took a long time to come together and was created using *Maya*.

The finished image was completed from pencil drawings scanned into *Photoshop* and finished off using *Painter*.

role-playing adventure game *Fable* and Climax's RPG *Sudeki* (**[w]** www.lionhead.com), both published by Microsoft Games. The team behind the strong fantasy packaging of both titles is a Californian company called Hubris Studios (**[w]** www.hubris-studios.com) who's Chief Designer, Todd Elhart, believes games packaging is more important now than it has ever been, especially as it is competing head on with so many other forms of entertainment.

"It completely sets a tone for the whole game and all of the marketing that goes along with it," says Todd. "There are lots of different types of entertainment out there — DVDs, movies and CDs — and games are competing with all of those things. Hardcore gamers read the magazines and look at websites and they know what they're going to buy, but a lot of sales don't happen like that — they are based on someone walking into a shop and looking at the shelf," insists Todd.

This is a fact which obviously hasn't passed the games developers and publishers by. They are only too aware of the make-or-break nature of box design, something which has lead them to use every trick possible to get the packaging right and something which has lead to a fairly tough process in terms of packaging design development.

"The packaging sets the tone for all the marketing for a game, so obviously it's important — you're talking about a game which has taken 40 people two years to develop and the publisher is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on marketing, so you've got to get it right. The whole process starts with a brief and usually a PowerPoint presentation," says Todd. "This will let us know what target market we are aiming at — for example, boys aged 14 to 25 — and give us something to start with. The developers know the competing games and they want theirs to stand out," he says.

Having fun with Fable

Todd says the development of the *Fable* packaging was a "lot of fun" because

Fact and Fable

Find our how a fantasy art classic was created by Hubris' Todd Elhart (pictured right) and Jo Chen...

Step One: Conceptualising

"The first thing we did with the *Fable* box was the conceptualising," Todd Elhart, Creative Director at Hubris Studios says. "We developed 12-15 ideas and, through discussion with the developer, narrowed those down to a few sketches which we passed to Jo Chen.

Elhart explains that Chen was chosen because of her background in Manga and comic art and also because she had a "very cool and distinctive style" and was also very flexible.

"She was much easier to work with than some of the older artists and just a real delight. She was open to ideas and she re-did the sketches in her own style. She did the character sketches of the boy and was able to get into his head," says Todd.

Step Two: Creating the basic image

Jo says Hubris already had some ideas about how the character on the cover of *Fable* should look and that she had screen captures of the game to work from. From this point, the next step was to create the drawings themselves.

Jo explains that she usually creates multiple rough sketches in thumbnail format which she can send back and forth to developers and the design team. She creates pencil sketches on paper and builds up the drawings to ensure proper perspective and dynamics are included.

Step Three: Finishing off

Once the sketch is complete and approved, it is then scanned into *Photoshop* where a base colour is applied. With *Fable*, all of the painting was done in Corel *Painter* with *Photoshop* in use simultaneously so Jo could toggle between the two applications.

"I paint them exactly as I would paint in oils or acrylics. The brushstrokes are real and done with my graphic stylus rather than a brush," says Jo.

Once the striking cover painting had been conceptualised, sketched, painted and finished off, the image is ready to go, needing just a few final tweaks in *Photoshop*.

The development of the game packaging can be based on screenshots of the games, but often starts with just a marketing presentation leaving the artists to create something out of very little.

Lionhead wanted something a "little different and a bit more conceptual than normal" – a process which eventually led to the innovative twin reflection image.

"We started with a lot of sketches and showed them all of our ideas. In *Fable* we saw an 18-year-old character looking down at his evil twin – we started with the character being older but they wanted it to be a boy," says Todd.

Once the conceptual bridge had been crossed – for both *Fable* and *Sudeki* – Hubris turned to its bank of freelance artists to develop the sketches into something resembling the cover art that makes the final box. "Once we have a concept and around 12-15 ideas, we go to our artists and get them to turn it into something more finished," explains Todd.

With *Fable* this was a relatively straightforward process involving work that up-and-coming Manga, Marvel and DC comic-book artist Jo Chen (**[w]** www.jo-chen.com) developed and finished using scans, Corel *Painter* and *Photoshop* (See 'Fact and Fable' on the previous page).

The cover art for *Sudeki*, however, has a more rendered 3D feel and, because of this, was a more complicated process. "With *Sudeki* we came up with the sketches of the characters at a low angle with a burst of light coming from above – an illustrator named Albert Co did them. *Sudeki* was mainly done in *Maya*. 3D modelling takes a long time in terms of things like hair and cloth, but we developed it, rendered it, and painted it in *Photoshop*. We re-did the sky and background. The background is real sky which has been computerised using *Photoshop*," says Todd.

Doom design

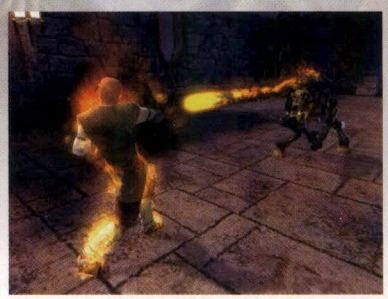
Over at developer BioWare (**[w]** www.bioware.com) – the company behind the phenomenally successful *Doom* series – veteran packaging designer Mike Sass (**[w]** www.sasssart.com) is also a fan of 3D software and a keen user of the gaming industry standard application *3ds max*, although he believes a good packaging image, such as the one he created for *Doom 3*, should transcend the application in which it was built.

"A good composition will outweigh a good bump map in terms of the viewer's appreciation of a static image. In terms of creating artwork, I have learned through experience what aspects of a job will require the most attention due to the job's purpose, and I can easily focus my energies on what will be important in any particular task," says Mike.

Understanding marketing

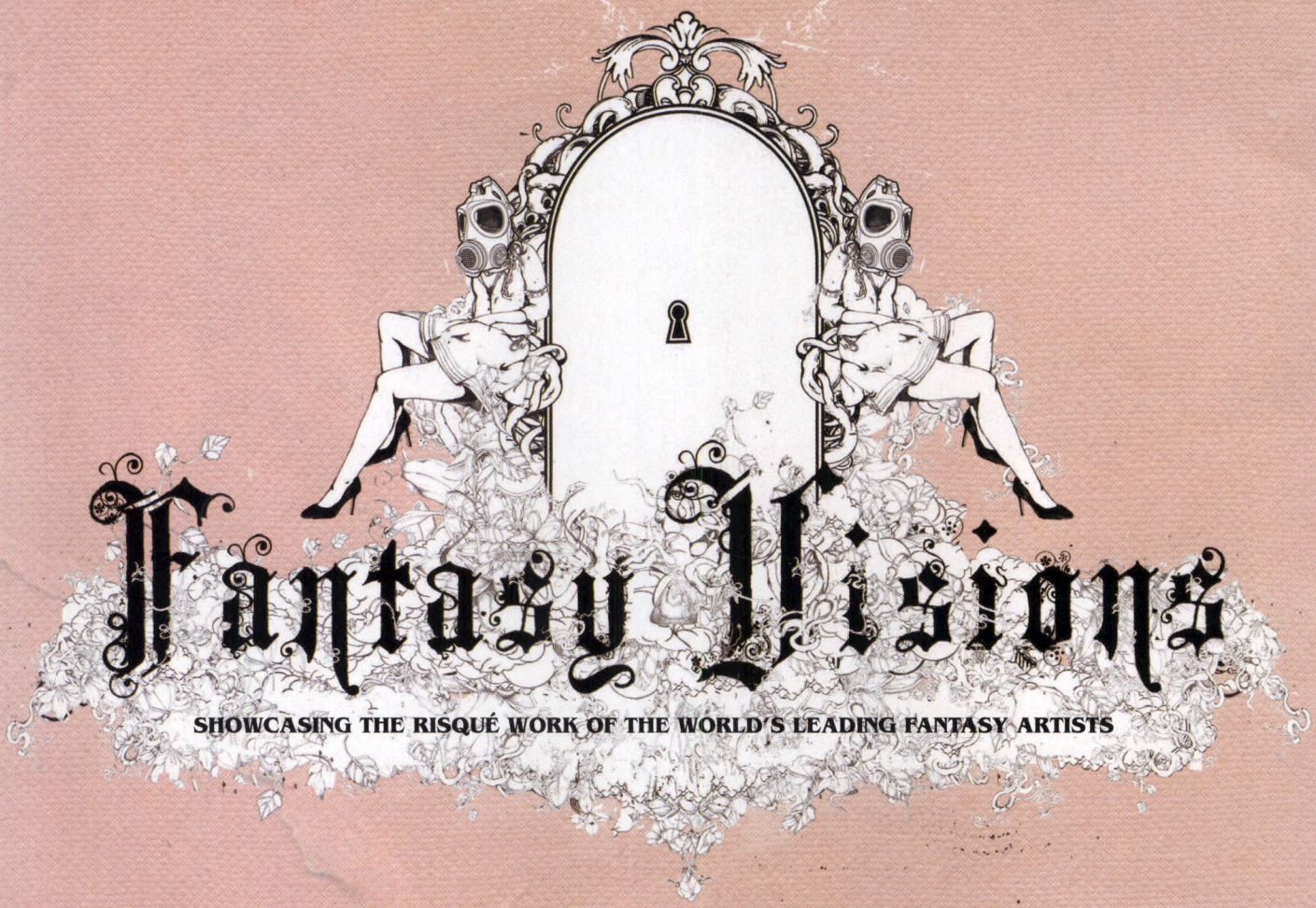
It's obvious from the experiences of Todd, Jo and Mike that raw artistic talent is important if you want to follow in their footsteps, but as with most things in the design industry, there's a lot more to it than that, especially a keen understanding of how marketing entertainment works.

"You need to get into the head of entertainment marketing: things like music CDs and club flyers. It's not exactly the same thing, but you are selling entertainment and that's important," explains Todd Elhart. "You also need to have the ability to create things out of nothing – that's what we look for in people. But it's interesting to see that designers today are a lot more open than they were say seven years ago: they have many more influences," he concludes. ca-p



Above: Good game packaging should transcend the application in which it was created, according to Mike Sass of BioWare, developers of the *Doom* series.

Right: Like *Fable* and *Sudeki*, BioWare's *Jade Empire* has used the fantasy art formula to staggering effect.



Fantasy Visions

SHOWCASING THE RISQUÉ WORK OF THE WORLD'S LEADING FANTASY ARTISTS

Steve Ferris

A traditional artist who has adopted digital tools, but stresses the need for basic drawing skills...

Until recently, New York based Steve Ferris painted with oils and, like many artists, was reluctant to move over to digital work. "I, like many other purists, would be damned first rather than switch over to the new computer media and lose the texture and colour depth of hand-drawn art," he says. "But I'm now convinced that if I create a 'black plate' with pencil, ink and/or wash, I can now incorporate these new technologies for fine results."

Steve continues: "By scanning and placing a pencil sketch in *Photoshop*, I have the basis of my illustration exactly how I want it. I can even incorporate Adobe *Illustrator* for complex elements that are very tedious to pencil."

[w] www.steveferris.com

Steve Ferris swears by "a few pencils with soft eraser coupled with a Wacom tablet, a fast ram-packed computer and a large, sharp monitor."

Steve Stahlberg

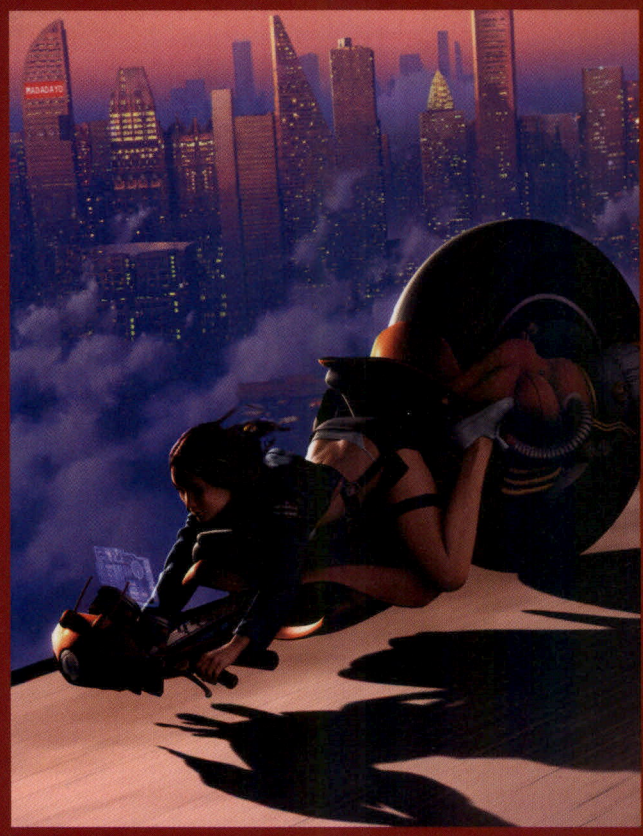
Back in 1978, Steve Stahlberg dreamed of a software program that would make human models, pose them and light them...

Steve Stahlberg lives and works as a freelancer in Kuala Lumpur using *Maya* and *Photoshop*. Although he works in both 2D and 3D, he insists the same principles apply to both.

On his website, Stahlberg demonstrates the similarities in modelling figures in both 2D and 3D: starting from sketching and building up primitive shapes and adding light and shade. Steve began creating virtual female characters in 1996 and was the first in the world to have a virtual character sponsored by a major modelling agency (Elite) in 1999.

[w] www.androidblues.com

Steve Stahlberg creates his fantasy images using *Maya* and the mental-ray renderer.



Ariock

Ariock's 'Chaotian erotica' images combine glamour photography with fantasy style...

In creating Ariock's images, the right model is key. When he can't find a suitable figure close to his home in Avignon, he resorts to what he refers to as 'cybermodelling': "I either look through the model's photo base to find the right picture to use as reference, or, when I get really lucky, the model does have a photographer on hand, and is able to shoot custom poses upon sketches, with angle and light indications."

Ariock works solely in *Photoshop CS* using the Airbrush and the Lasso to create tribal markings or metal shapes. Each image can contain hundreds of layers, enabling him to define each light and shadow, as well as details, right up to the completed illustration.

[w] www.ariock.com

"Women are my primary inspiration, their beauty and charisma inspiring these pure or even dark Goddesses. This is why my artworks usually begin with texts or mythologies I've created for each character," says Ariock.

Wang Wei

Chinese fantasy artist Wang Wei is inspired by his love of *Warcraft* and his collection of action figures...

Wang Wei is a freelance concept artist for games, films and fantasy stories and has a passion for the fantasy genre, particularly the characters from the World of Warcraft RPG. He admires the work of Borm, Justin Sweet, Luis Royo and Frank Frazetta.

Wang's artwork is created by using a combination of *Photoshop* and *Painter*. "I usually prefer to draw clothes with an Airbrush in *Photoshop* and use the oil pastel of *Painter* to draw the skin."

Inspiration for his characters come from fantasy films, games and the action figures he collects. He says that he often uses photographs of himself or his wife as the basis for his images.

[w] www.blizzard-art.com

The image 'Witch' (right) was inspired by a character from Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow*, with close-fitting corsage and rotting rags hanging from her body.

2004

Henning Ludvigsen

Norwegian Henning Ludvigsen started creating digital art in the days of the Amiga and the graphics demo scene, which showcased the abilities of nascent digital artists...

Like many digital fantasy artists, Henning's interests have lead him into the video games industry and he works full time on the MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Game) *Darkfall at Aventurine*, based in Athens.

Henning relies on *Photoshop* and a Wacom tablet for his work. He has tried other packages in the past, but likes to keep things simple. "My favourite brush is simply an ordinary hard-edged brush, which makes painting digitally feel slightly more like painting in real life. I use an ordinary Wacom tablet when painting and I don't believe you need fancy equipment or software to be able to have fun making art," he says

[w] www.henningludvigsen.com

Henning Ludvigsen's character work for the online game *Darkfall*. Henning often uses his girlfriend or other friends as reference.

Henning
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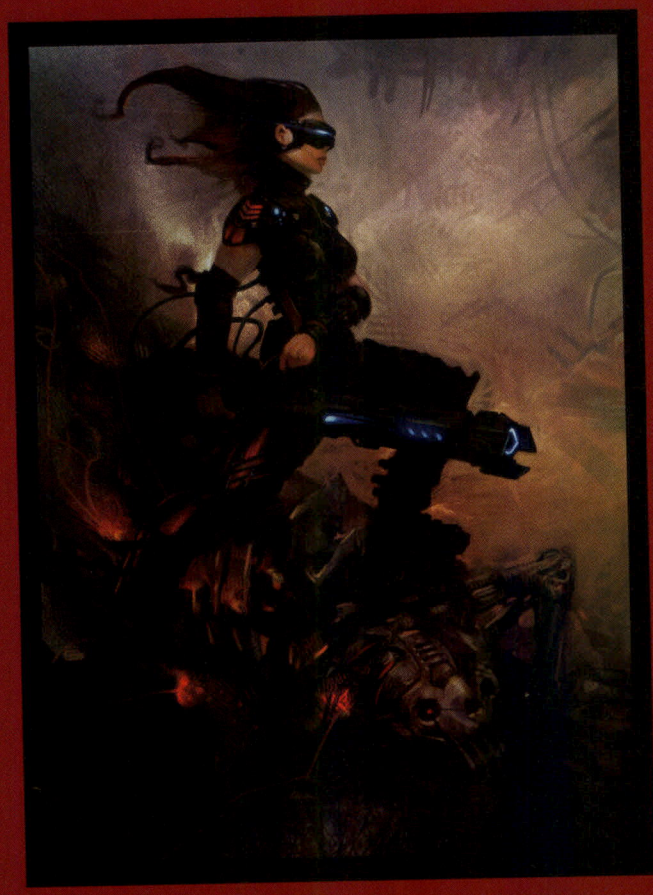


Daryl Mandryk

Daryl Mandryk is a concept artist who demonstrates the full capabilities of Corel *Painter*...

Working as a conceptual artist first at EA games and now at his own company, Perception games, Daryl Mandryk found that while working in 3D "his time was being spent on technical issues rather than artistry" so he bought *Painter*.

"In *Painter* I use the default tools with a couple of custom brushes. The brush I use most often is the Round Camelhair, which is a great overall simulation of an actual paintbrush. I use the Glow brush sometimes to pop out certain areas. Finally, the various Airbrushes and Chalk brushes are great for adding texture and implied detail," says Daryl.

[w] http://members.shaw.ca/dmandryk

Daryl Mandryk is inspired by classic American painters N C Wyeth and Howard Pyle.

Robert Chang

A veteran of fantasy art, Robert Chang has retired from the CG industry to concentrate on painting, digital painting, composing music, writing and photography...

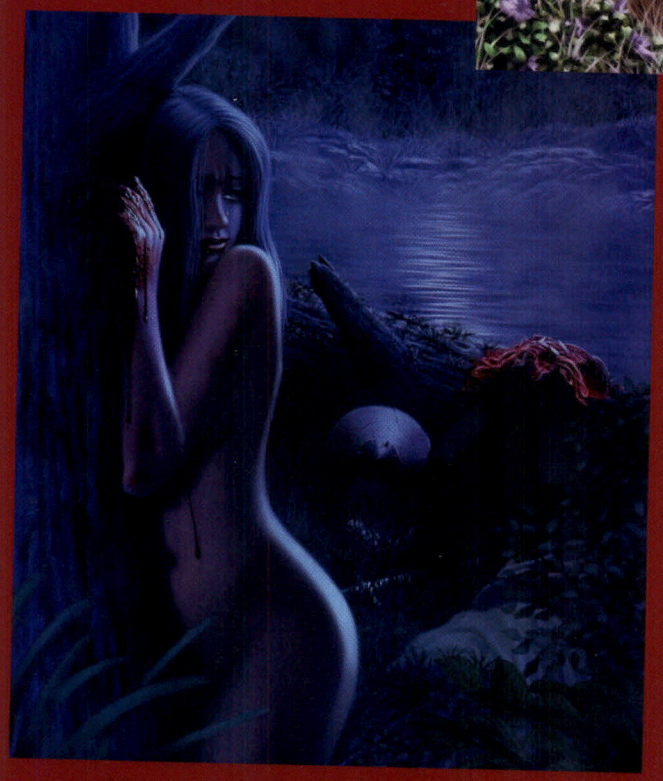
Robert Chang began his career as a comic book artist in San Francisco. Like many artists, he found that the money was to be made by working in the video games industry, which is where he became inspired to write and create his own mythology. "I'm a storyteller first and foremost (I write prose, screenplays, etc.), and my artworks are almost always telling some kind of a story, or depicting characters from my stories," says Robert.

Robert later learnt to use *Maya* and worked alongside Steven Stahlberg at his company in Malaysia on a short film, *Promise*, that he hopes one day will get an airing.

Robert's preferred programs are *Photoshop* and *Painter* in his 2D work, but he also uses *Maya* and *Wings3D* for modelling

[w] www.ethereality.info

'Scythe Wolf' (right) is an anime-inspired image. Robert had wanted to work as an animator in Japan but couldn't because of difficulties getting a work visa.



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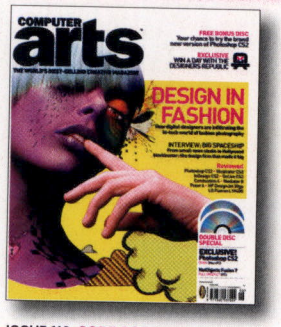

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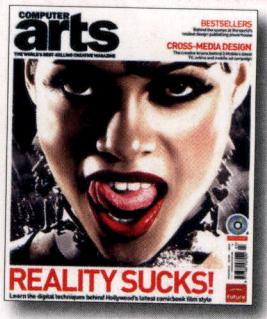

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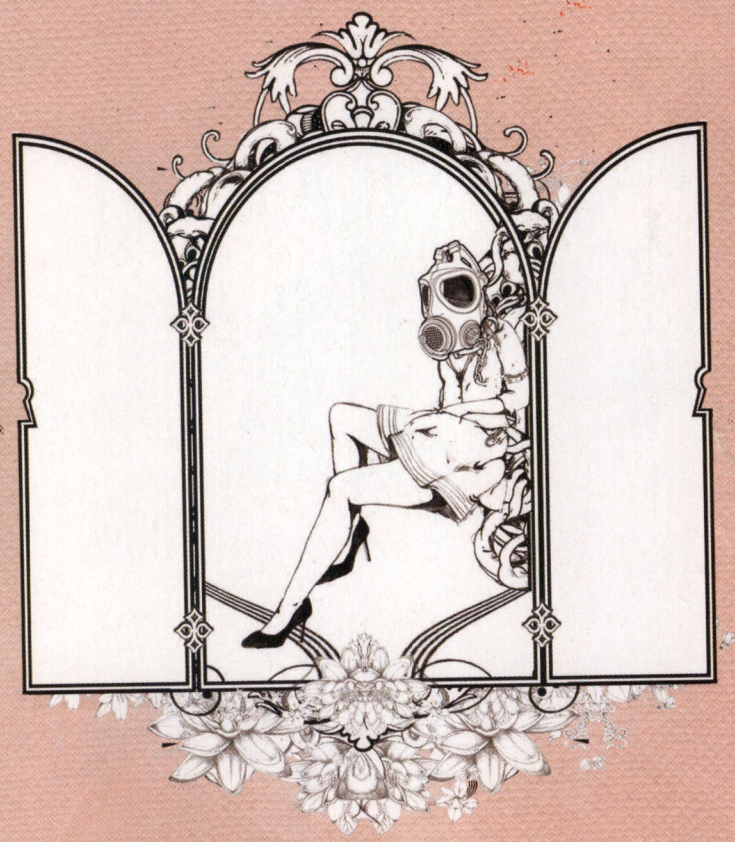

[illustration] Neal Murren [w] www.neal murren.com

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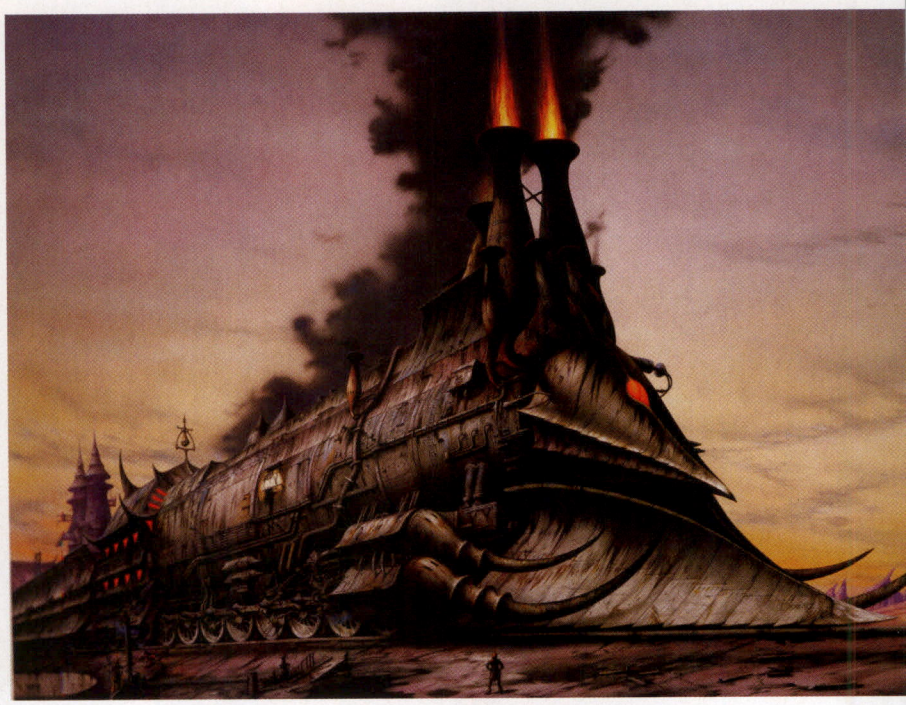
Main image: Concept sketches of a diverse selection of space ships produced for the game *Shadow Master* by Sygnosis.

Bottom: Dr Agon's control room show's the "arch villain" of Rodney's animated series busy plotting all sorts of devastation from the safety of space.

Bottom right: Designed by Rodney as a poster, this image actually appeared as a record cover for the inimitable Diamond Head.



[w] www.rodneymatthews.com

Rodney Matthews

"I believe the best is yet to come, that today's vision is tomorrow's reality, not just from an earthly point of view but also from the spiritual." Rodney Matthews is Mister Fantastic.

From he moment in 1969 when Thin Lizzy first spied a Rodney Matthews poster advertising live music at Bristol University, the future course of fantasy art was in some way altered.

Thirty years and a mountain of record covers, posters and books later Rodney continues to influence our vision of the fantastic, forever extending the rock music-related credentials of the fantasy genre.

Green-fingered boy

"I'm grateful to be able to earn my living from something I enjoy," says Rodney. The humility of this comment makes the origins of his art easier to imagine. "As a boy I would spend hours watching butterflies and other insects going about their business in our back garden," he recalls, and though few of these were of the classic praying mantis/spacecraft hybrid school, the seed was sewn.

A country boy at heart, these early reflections had a telling influence, notes Rodney: "Given a free hand, I would always choose to draw animals, insects or plants." But as time went on it wasn't enough to just represent the world, "So I started to exaggerate and embellish." Stemming from what the artist himself describes as "a need to be different", this preference for a gilded reality was clearly a staging post on the road to fully-fledged fantasy.

Cartoons

There was another obsession for the young Rodney Matthews: "I would watch *Snow White, Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan* with my sister at our local flea pit cinema then rush home to make my own drawings of the characters and scenes."

This interest was further accented by Rodney's first art lesson: "My father spontaneously drew a range of Disney characters around the walls of our living room one day." As you can imagine, this had a lasting impression, so much so that it's in these early Disney impressions that Rodney sees the origins of his style.

Musical youth

Dad also influenced the young Matthews in a musical direction: "He played drums in a dance band during the 1930s and 40s and made the mistake of leaving an old drum kit lying about the house."

This led to the inevitable: "I started to thrash about on the ancient kit in time with records by The Shadows, Sandy Nelson and various jazz bands on old 78s." Then, during a two-year stint at art college in Bristol, Rodney says, "I noticed that many of the students were not only artists but musicians and would play guitars in the common room after lessons."

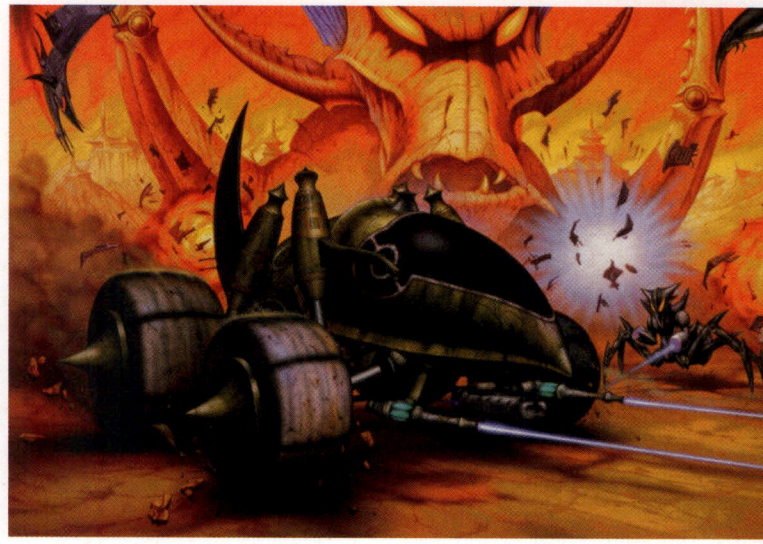
Rodney fancied some of the action so he formed his own band and "went on to play through the genres of rock 'n' roll, soul, psychedelia and progressive." Regrettably, this was not what fate had in mind, "The whole thing fizzled out in 1974," he says.

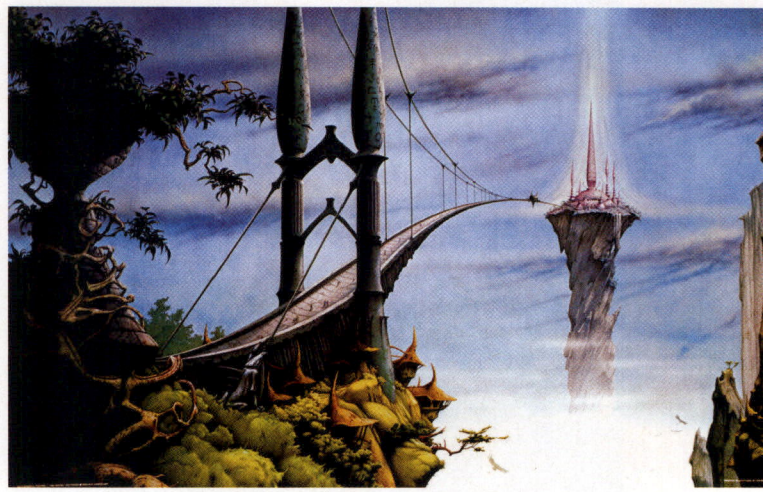
College of knowledge

Although Rodney did spend two years – 1961 and 1962 – at The West of England College of Art studying commercial design, he maintains that "I am mostly self taught." One explanation for this could be that although the course featured still life and figure drawing, "There was no fantasy art!"

The lack of a fantastic module on the course was not entirely fatal, because it was here that the record sleeve made its debut on Rodney's creative horizon. "My first record cover was a hypothetical exercise in which I was required to design a colour LP sleeve for Stravinski's *Fire Bird*."

From Stravinsky, Rodney quickly moved on to produce artwork for his own group, Pentworths People, but it was to take a man in leather trousers to seal the deal. "My





Top: The US box cover for *Shadow Master*.

Above: "I lived in Clifton at the time this image was created," recalls Rodney, "overlooking Brunel's suspension bridge." 'Sanctuary' was the result.

Left: These images come from concept drawings for the computer game *Haven – The Call of the King*, published by Midway, made in Manchester by Traveller's Tales.

first paid commission was for Thin Lizzy's *New Day* EP," he recalls.

The draw of the fantastic

The common appeal of fantasy art is its unalloyed celebration of escapism. "It's the freedom to explore and to sail away into other worlds," says Matthews before adding that, "Good fantasy art should be governed by the rules of our own world, keeping things believable even when surreal or strange."

In this way, the work maintains its relevance to everyday experience, "My illustrations," says Rodney, "also say something of the real world, the battling of good and evil, the joys and injustices." Though he acknowledges his talent, there's graft in there too: "I've had to work hard refining that gift."

At this point, the fantasist makes a single reference to his own beliefs, "As a Christian, I am looking forward to a change in the natural order, where the Lion lies down with the lamb." He then appends an important request: "And universal travel is instantaneous!"

One of the most notable things about Rodney's work is the rounded clarity of the world his images depict. This has become more relevant as technology has finally caught up with his intentions.

Vision thing

Until about a decade ago, explains Rodney, "Most of my images had been two dimensional, yet I always knew what lay beyond the horizon in a landscape piece, or what a creature looked like from the other side." The picture was alive and in some sense internally consistent.

"I suppose I've always had a vision of this alternative universe," agrees Rodney. "Yet, given time, I feel there is so much more to explore." Then, to make sure we have the complete picture he adds that, "When I'm contemplating commencement of an illustration I can usually visualise the scene in 3D."

This three-dimensional understanding has made Rodney a natural partner for the latest generation of gaming companies. In fact, he admits that he's found the process of designing for animation and video games "both pleasurable and rewarding", despite what he describes as the "customary polygon shortages."

Team pressures

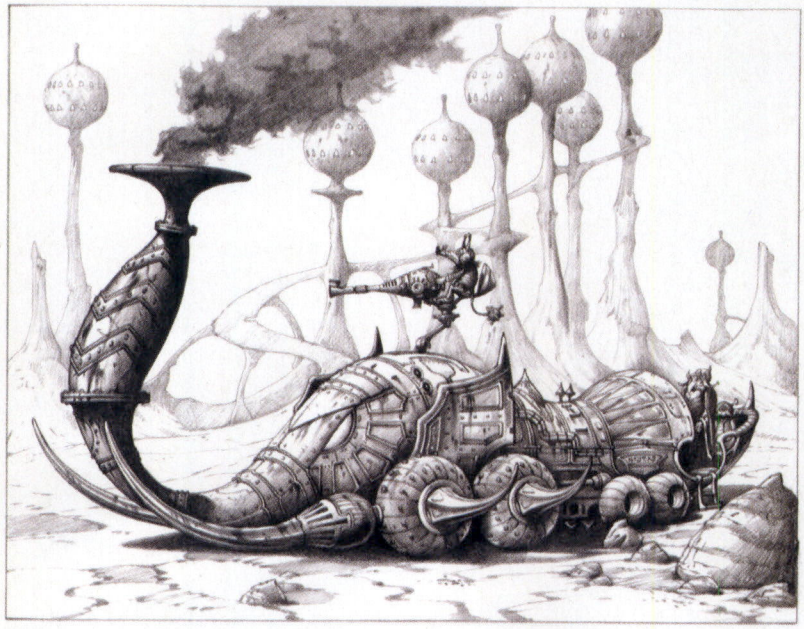
Though he produces his illustrations in the approved hermit fashion, using primarily traditional methods, there's a team player in there waiting to get out. "I like the team atmosphere prevailing in these disciplines," he says, and what's more "being an ex-advertising man I'm able to stand the pressures fairly well."

Rodney Matthews is working for the love of his art and that art has never been in better shape. "It does help to be appreciated as an artist," he says, "but I'd do it anyway." That's why he continues to exert such a powerful influence over the fantastic. **ca-p**

Below: The promo poster for the animated series *Lavender Castle*, produced in tandem with Rodney's long-time friend and collaborator Gerry 'Thunderbirds' Anderson.

Below right: Rodney finds himself in the fortunate position of producing work which is collectible in its own right. 'Ensemble' is a private commission "for a Dutch collector."

Bottom right: Designed for Wizard and Genius of Zurich, the Swiss poster company, "Asked for something spacey." Rodney didn't disappoint.



Moving images

Despite his success, there's an ongoing battle to bring the Rodney Matthews' universe to the silver screen. "If I am steering a course at all, it is towards seeing my images move," he says. Ever since the artist was first captivated by Disney's early animations of the 50s, he has dreamed of putting his work into motion.

"The nearest I have come to this so far is with my children's animated series." *Lavender Castle*, a joint project with Gerry *'Thunderbirds'* Anderson, was completed in 1998 but the feat has yet to be repeated.

As ever, the central problem is one of funds: "Obtaining these can be tedious in the extreme," laments Rodney, who just wants to get on with realising his dream. "With its formidable reputation for the distribution of hot air, the film and animation business is not easy to break into."

But the artist responsible for classic artwork such as Nazareth's *No Mean City* is undaunted: "Ultimately, I should like to run my own animation studio." There's no shortage of ideas either. With half a dozen projects on the go simultaneously something will click sooner or later. "'Like to do more of this' is a serious understatement!" he laughs.

Above left: A sketch for 'the mammoth machine' from *Lavender Castle*.

Left: The Scraggutt Rider. This critter and his jockey were produced for auction in the US, demonstrating the fact that Rodney has helped to elevate fantasy art to new levels of appreciation.

Tutorial

[illustration] Lewis Moorcroft [w] www.theartoflewismoorcroft.co.uk

Build fantasy landscapes

Use *MojoWorld* to create and render your own complete fantasy worlds, incorporating detailed terrain, atmosphere and more...

Over the next four pages we're going to show you how to create entire planets using *MojoWorld*, a program that offers fantastic detail and is free on this month's CD. This tutorial has a fantasy theme, but *MojoWorld* is also capable of creating more 'Earth-like' themes for your illustrations too.

We'll start by setting up a blank planet, and then adding the different components of a planet such as the atmosphere, terrain, terrain materials and water. It's important to realise that some components will affect other components, so by working in a particular order – the order set out in this tutorial – we can begin to understand these components better.

The planet we're going to create will be based on a mauve theme. It will be a dark and moody place with a thin atmosphere, but will include vibrant cloud layers to go with the fantasy theme. On the CD, you'll find the finished planet file, which contains all the components covered in this tutorial. You'll also find your free copy of *MojoWorld 2 SE*.

Expertise provided by Lewis Moorcroft, a moderator for the *MojoWorld* community at sites including Renderosity and 3DCommune. Visit his website at [w] www.theartoflewismoorcroft.co.uk.

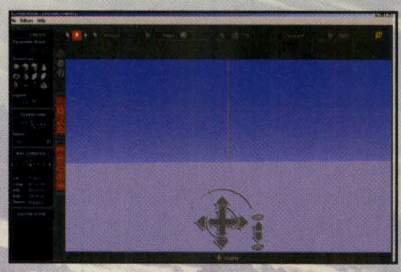
The final MJW file can be found on the *Computer Arts Projects* CD73 in the Software\Tutorials\Tutorial files\Tutorial files\All\Landscape folder.

Part 1: Getting started

Create a new planet file in *MojoWorld* and set up your camera...

Field of View

The wider you set the view, the more some components get stretched. This is most noticeable with moons. To reduce this effect, place the moon towards the centre of the image and keep the camera's pitch and roll close to zero. These controls are in the Transporter (File>Go To Transporter).



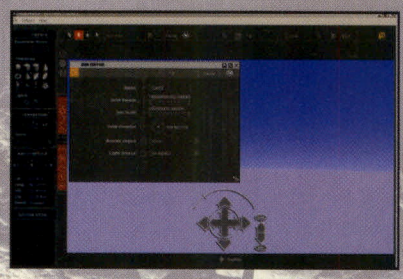
1 After loading *MojoWorld* and clicking Continue at the welcome screen, the default planet is loaded. Make sure you're in Generator (File>Go To Generator), then create a new planet (File>New). Also set the Generator UI Mode to Normal (Editors>Preference).

2 Open the Camera Editor by clicking the Edit icon at the top right of the screen. Creating a blank planet will set the Field of View to 45. Change this to 75 to give a wider view. You can rename the camera if you plan to add more cameras.

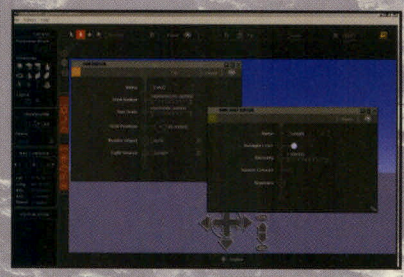
3 It's always good to set the camera's altitude a little higher. So set the altitude to 10km by either pressing the 10K button on the JogNav or by pressing the B key. Altitude is displayed as the AGL number under the Nav Console on the left.

Part 2: Setting up the lighting

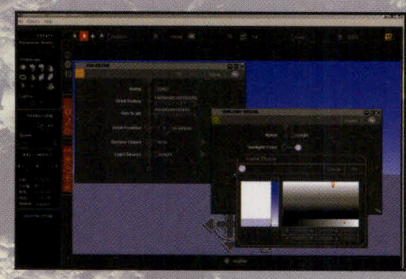
Set up the sun, which is the planet's main source of lighting...



1 The sun can play a role on the colours, clouds, materials and water at different times of day. We suggest you use the neutral colour of white. Open the Sun Editor located on the left with the red global parameter hot buttons.



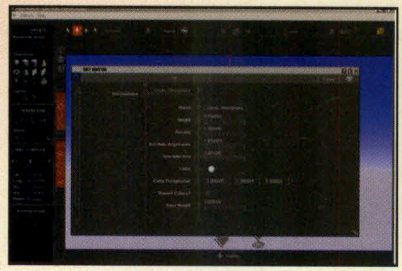
2 First, change the sun's position so it's not directly overhead by setting the Orbit Position to 45. Now open the Sun Editor by clicking the box with the '<' to the right of Light Source. Set the Intensity to 1.3 to give a stronger light source.



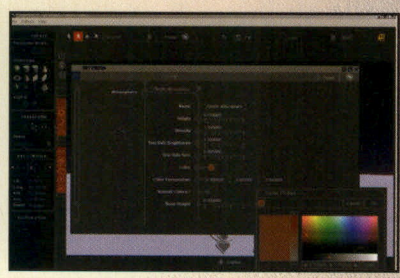
3 Now change the colour from the default colour of pale blue to white by clicking on the colour itself. This will open the Colour Picker. Change the R (Red), G (Green) and B (Blue) values to 1 and click OK. Close the Sunlight and Sun Editors.

Part 3: Creating the atmosphere

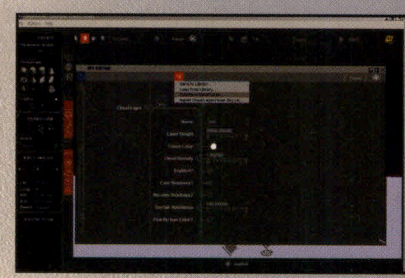
Now define the mood of the planet, and set up the cloud layers...



1 Open the Sky Editor by clicking its hot button. To create a Cloudy Atmosphere open the property list by clicking the '>' button. To make a thin and moody atmosphere we need to reduce its Height to 0.15 and increase the Density to 1.3.



2 Now change the colour from blue to a mauve colour, click the colour widget to open the Colour Picker and change the RGB colours to 0.5, 0.31 and 0.26 respectively. Also change the Colour Perspective to 0.5, 0.5, 3 – this describes how the colour changes with distance.

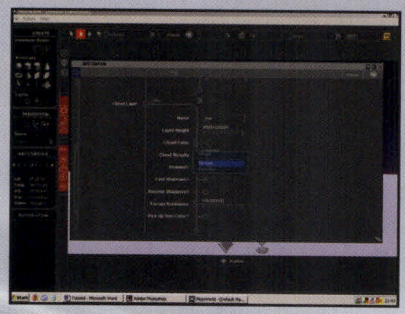


3 Now let's add some cloud layers. At the top of the Sky Editor is a list icon – click this and select 'Add New Cloud Layer'. Scroll down to the cloud layer and click on None. Select Cloud Layer, then open its properties. This is going to be our lower cloud layer.

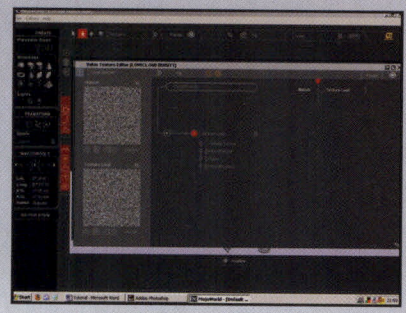
Creating the atmosphere continued...

Texture Output Preview

In any texture editor, whether it's for terrain, materials, cloud or water textures, there's a very handy output preview box that shows a guide of what our texture looks like from an overhead view. The changes in greyscale indicate the changes in the height of the fractal. You can zoom in and out to get closer detail or a more general view.



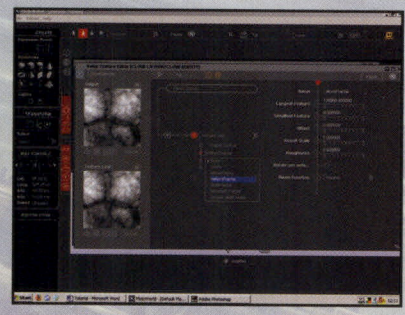
4 Set the Cloud Colour to a dark brown by clicking the colour widget and choosing 0.25, 0.23 and 0.2 for RGB. Now set up the texture of the clouds using Cloud Density. Click on the semi-circle to the right of Cloud Density and select Texture.



5 This will load up a new Texture Editor. Go to the list icon at the top and select New Texture. It's good practice to name each new texture node. Click the 't' to create a new Texture Leaf, and then click it again to open its properties.

6 First, let's assign a MonoFractal (uniform behaviour). Click this to view its properties. Set the Largest Feature to 130000 (the fractal's spread in metres), and the Roughness to 0.5 (to give a busier texture). Uncheck 'Rotate per octave' and set the Basis Function to Voronoi, from the dropdown list.

7 A Voronoi basis function (a cell-like function) has several settings of its own. Click the '<' of the Basis Function to bring up its Editor. Change the Voronoi to a '1st & 2nd Closest Neighbour' mode. Notice the change in the output preview box.

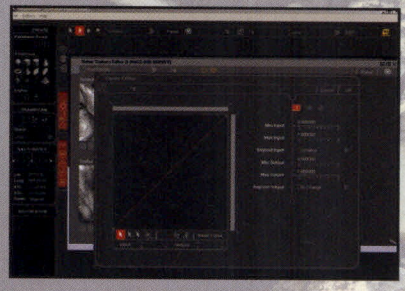


8 So we have our cloud fractal, but let's assign some distortion to make the clouds look a little more interesting. Distortion takes the point for your texture (World Position) and adds another texture to it. For this, select HeteroFractal, which is a fractal function where its roughness varies with altitude.

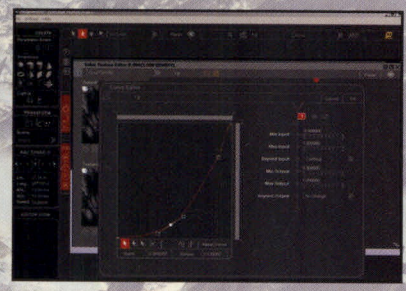
9 Set the Largest Feature to 140000, the Result Scale to 210000, and the Roughness to 0.4. We'll be using the default basis function of Value/Gradient Perlin (a high quality Perlin Basis Function).

Part 4: Making cloud adjustments

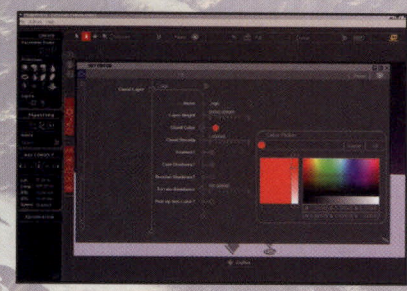
Now adjust the clouds so you have two layers of dramatic colours and effects...



1 We need to make some adjustments to the Output Control so we don't have a cloud blanket. Click the Output Control and then click the Input Curve graph icon. This key feature acts as a filter to a value to change its range or magnitude, commonly applied to fractals before output.



2 Set the Min Input to -1 to give a wider range. Now edit the curve to a steeper one to change the distribution of the magnitude of the clouds. The curve enables you to add and remove points using the controls under the curve. Each point has a 'handle' to change the curve's direction.

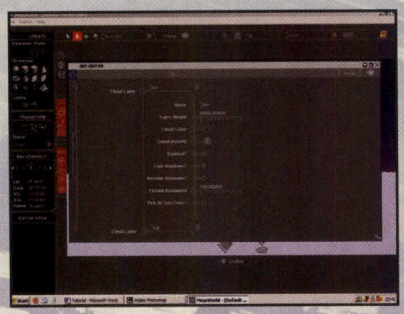


3 This is our low cloud layer completed. Close the Texture Editor and return to the Sky Editor. Let's add a second layer using the same method previously mentioned. This will be a higher layer so set the altitude to 50,000 and use a strong red colour RGB of 1, 0.2, and 0.2.

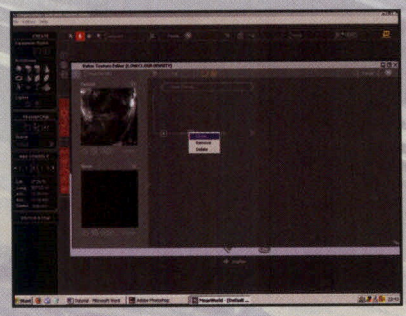
Making cloud adjustments continued...

Render settings

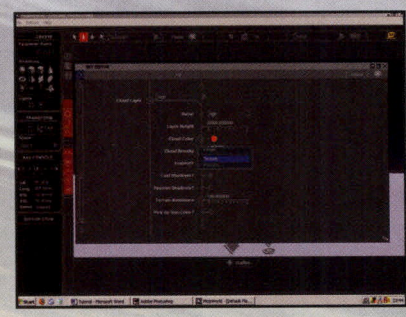
MojoWorld comes with five preset render settings, from a very low setting to a very high detail setting. For test renders we like to use the Normal setting as it shows a fair amount of detail at a reasonable speed. Render times comes down to processor speed so the faster your computer, the shorter the render time.



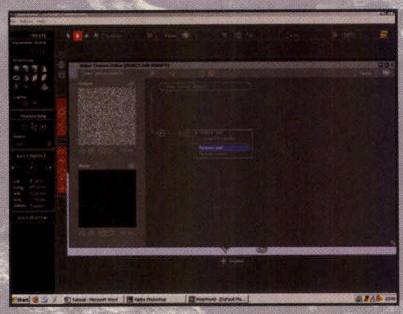
4 As we're going to use exactly the same cloud density texture as our low cloud layer, we can just use a clone of the texture instead of having to re-write all the properties. So go back into the low Cloud Density texture editor by clicking the 't'.



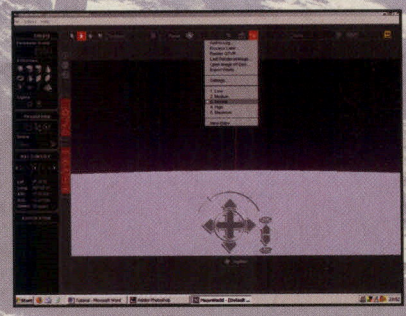
5 Right-click the 't' and a small list appears with a few options. Select Clone. This copies the entire texture and has now renamed our 'Texture Leaf' to 'Texture Leaf01'. Close the Texture Editor.



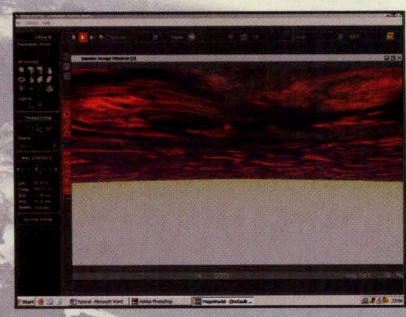
6 Go back to the high cloud and set the Cloud Density to a Texture by clicking the semi-circle.



7 Select a New Texture from the list icon, click the T to active the texture then click on Texture Leaf for a dropdown menu. In this menu, we should find our original 'Texture Leaf' from our low cloud layer. Select it and view the output control.



8 Close the Texture Editor and Sky Editor and that's the second cloud layer done. Now is a good time to do a test render as clouds are not shown in the RTR. Click the 'Adjust Render Settings' button at the top and select Normal.



9 Normal is a good setting for test renders as it shows a good level of detail within a good render time. Hit the 'Render Current Scene' button and you'll see the striking red clouds and the darker brown clouds at the different altitudes.

Part 5: Setting up the terrain

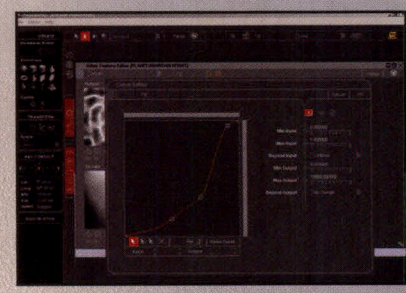
Characterise the planet's surface using fractals and set the finer details of your terrain.....

Terrain and noise

When creating new planets it can be easy to find yourself with a terrain that's too rough, resulting in unwanted artefacts being created when material displacements are added. By using a combination of a low Roughness setting, a small 'Smallest Feature Size' and positive Zero-Offset, we can try to reduce roughness and hopefully prevent artefacts from cropping up.

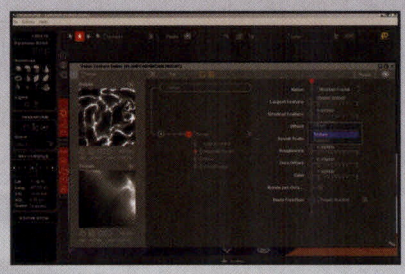
1 It's now time to deal with the planet's surface. First, open the Texture Editor by clicking the red 'Land Texture Editor' hot button. Select New Texture from the menu and give the node a suitable title. Click the 't' and also give the Texture Leaf a suitable title.

2 For the land texture, we're going to assign a MountainFractal which adds more variation to the landscape than a MonoFractal. Set the Largest Feature to 200,000, the Smallest Feature to 5, Roughness to 0.3, Zero-Offset to 0.2 and a Basis Function of Ridged Gradient.

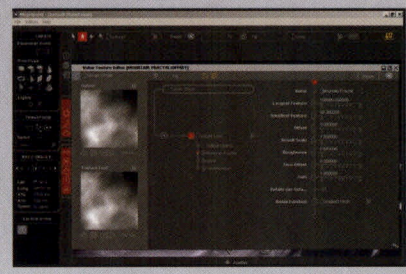


3 We need to give the terrain some shape and height using the Output Control curve. So click the icon to go into the Curve Editor. The curve depicts the shape of the terrain with altitude. To set the maximum altitude of your terrain, use the Max Output setting. This is in metres so set this to 10,000.

Setting up the terrain continued...



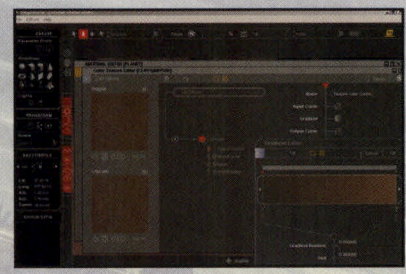
4 You'll see your terrain in basic form in the RTR. We have a standard terrain, but it doesn't vary much. One of the properties we haven't used is Offset. This is very useful. So in the Terrain Editor, set the Offset to a texture by clicking its semi-circle.



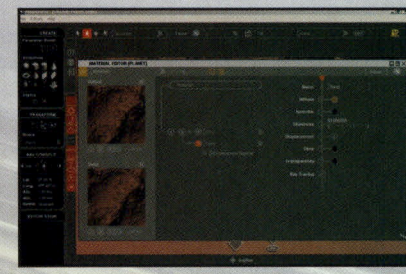
5 Offset basically moves the terrain fractal around to give more variation. Create a new texture and name the node and texture leaf. Use a MountainFractal and set the Largest Feature to 100,000, Smallest Feature to 50, Roughness to 0.65, Zero-Offset to 0 and Basis Function to Gradient Perlin.

6 If you explore the planet in the RTR, you'll see the terrain is quite unique now. Before adding any materials you should first set your sea level. It's just a visual aid to see how high the water will come up our terrain. Open the Water Editor and 'Create New Ocean'. Set the level to what looks good in the RTR, such as 0m.

7 Open the Material Editor using the 'Land Material Editor' hot button. The first of two materials will be a cliff mat for the terrain slopes. Displacement first – make this a texture. Using a MonoFractal, set the Largest Feature to 2000, Result scale to -1 (to invert the Basis Function), Roughness to 0.3, Basis Function Voronoi at '1st & 2nd Closest Neighbour' and set Max Output on the Output Control to 50.



8 Let's add some colour to this material. Set the cliff material Diffuse as a texture. Using a MonoFractal, set the Largest Feature to 2000, the Roughness to 0.5 and use a Value/Gradient Perlin Basis Function. The Output Control is a little different here. We can ignore the Output Curve but set the Min Input to -1 on the Input Curve and change the black-and-white to two shades of reddy-brown on the gradient.



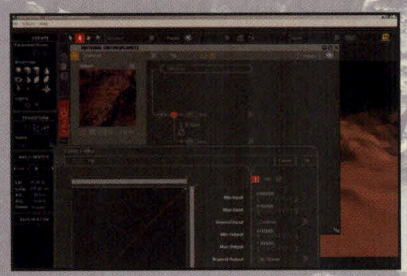
9 Our second material will be sand. Create a new material by clicking the 'm' underneath the Cliffs 'm'. For the displacement use a MonoFractal with Largest Feature of 50, Result Scale of -1 and a Voronoi Basis Function set as '3rd & 4th Closest Neighbour'. Set the Max Output on the Output Control to 10. For the Diffuse we will use a widget of RGB 0.5, 0.31, 0.26.

Part 6: The final components

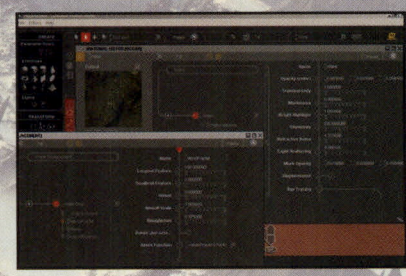
Blend materials, add water and moons, and render your image...

Blending by slope

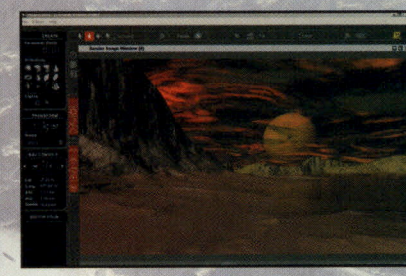
The Min Input and Max Input are very crucial for slope blending. These settings determine the angle at which the blend should occur. At closer to 1 the blend will be on flatter areas, at closer to 0 the blend will occur on steeper surfaces. The difference in Min and Max will determine how smooth or sharp the transition is. So if both numbers are identical, the transition will be the sharpest possible.



1 In order to get our rock material to only appear on steep surfaces, we must use a slope blend. Click the 'b' in-between the two materials and change the blend from Maximum to Slope. Open its Curve Editor and enter the numbers 0.85 for Min Input and 0.9 for Max Input.



2 Water is affected by atmosphere and lighting so is usually designed at the end stages. Re-open the Water Editor and select the 'm' and create a New Material, making sure you choose Water Material instead of Displacement Material. We've designed a basic, clear water with a simple wave pattern using displacements. We've also activated 'True Reflection' under Ray Tracing to give a much more realistic material.



3 To finish , let's add a moon. *MojoWorld* comes with some excellent library moons that are easy to load using the Moon Editor. Adjust its orbit radius to make it larger or smaller in the sky. Once done, find a point of interest, adjust the sun and moon's position using the Time Editor to set your lighting direction and moon position. Render using Normal, or High setting, to get some extra detail. ca-p

Profile

[w] www.thenextside.com

TheNextSide

"I like my robots and guns," says Tim Warnock, thus revealing something important about his world view...

Like many who find themselves in thrall to the fantastic, Tim Warnock has been gravitating towards his subject for a long time. His work is a labour of love, beautifully depicting a "sort of broken retro version of the future" which he refuses to see as dystopian. "It's a comment on the human condition," he says. "If you're telling a story in that world then the hope you find there exists in spite of the environment." This man is a dreamer, you have to love him for that.

"It was kind of by default that I got into art," and with this typically self-deprecating comment, Tim attempts to explain away his natural talent. Pushed on the subject, he'll go as far as to say that, "As a result of having some natural talent I didn't try too hard." Now that is a comment on the human condition.

His obvious ability was spotted and put to use by the family: "I ended up going into graphic design because I had an uncle who worked in the business." This uncle did a lot of work for the music business and this had an appeal: "I thought, yeah, it would be pretty cool to work on record covers."

Naturally enough, this lead to a graphic design course, where Tim fell in love with illustration. "Nobody had told me there was this career where you could just draw," says Tim. It was a revelation to him. The exact date of this realisation is lost to the mists of time. "I'd have to look it up," says Tim, "but it's more than ten years ago."

Below: This painting was inspired by a character Tim conceived one day. "He's kind of a futuristic cowboy type guy," explains the artist, "who rides a flying vehicle named Nelly."

Bottom: Part of a series of banners for SilverBirch Studios. "I love futuristic urban scenes and flying ships," says Tim. "I'm also inspired by congested urban environments like London and Japan."

We have ignition

Despite this newly discovered love of illustration, Tim was seduced by the dark side: "By my second year I'd started doing freelance work." On the face of it that sounds kind of promising, but it wasn't. "It led to me getting expelled for poor attendance." The plot thickens as Tim lets on that he had "become involved with the garment industry." Images of back-street sweat shops and bleeding fingers spring to mind, but the truth was far more insidious: "I was doing bunnies and bears for kids clothes."

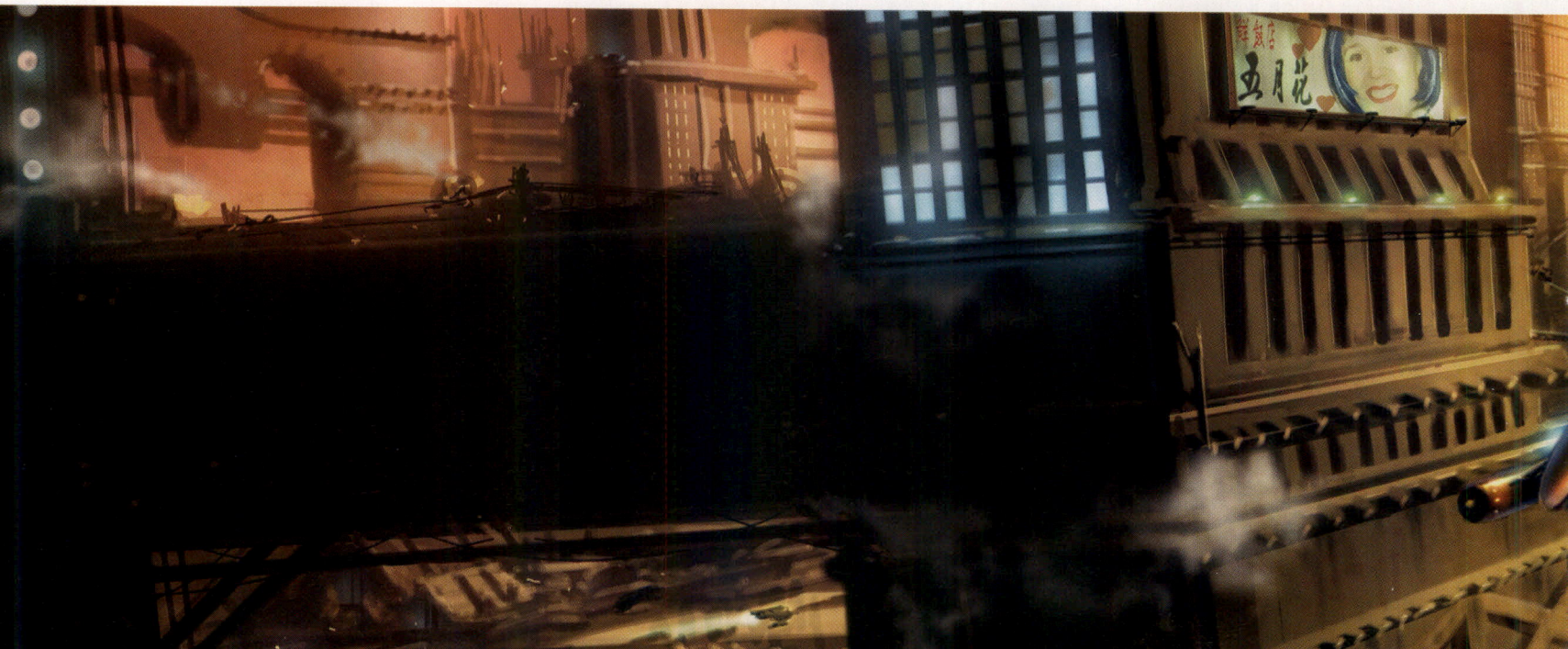
Tim was, and is, part of the *Star Wars* generation, and was full of hope: "I had a regular pay cheque and I thought it was the best job in the world." It was a type of temporary insanity he claims and, strangely, you don't need to see his identification.

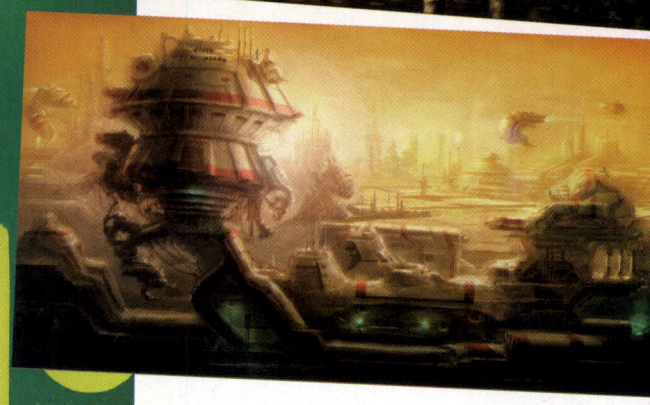
The freelance menace

After three years decorating evening wear for the under fives, Tim had had enough and decided to go freelance. It wasn't well thought-out though: "I just launched into it. I had no savings and after a while I had to move back in with my parents."

This was a difficult period, but good times were just cresting the horizon. "I was contacted by someone who needed a web person," recalls Tim, "so I learned *Flash* and HTML pretty quickly." A career in web development nosed the surface of possibility at this point.

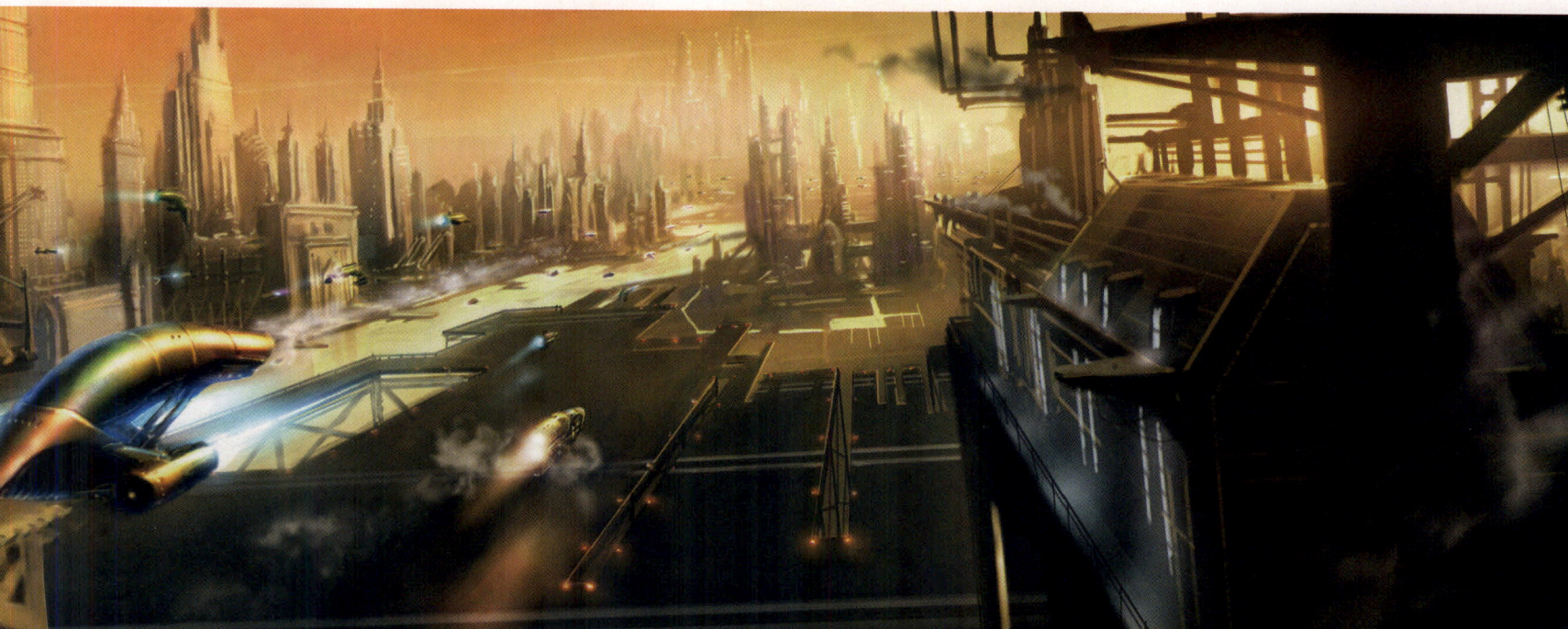
Unfortunately, along with half the internet, that particular venture folded. Tim was prepared though: "I found something else right away." That something was Riordon Design, a boutique studio in Oakville, ›

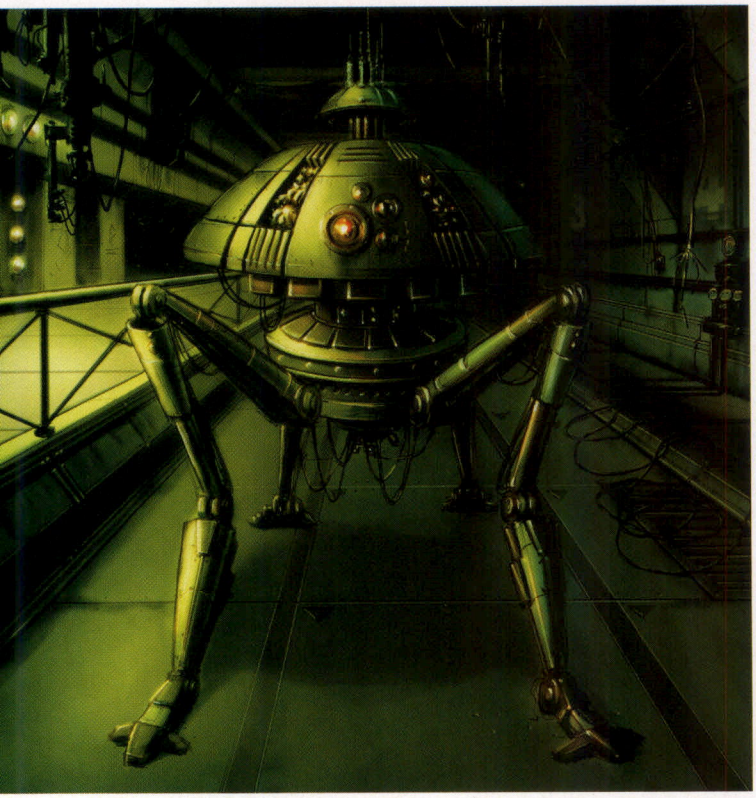




Above: Part of a series of banners for SilverBirch Studios. "Working with only a few layers, I build up my composition trying to create a huge sense of space," says Tim. "It's a simple one-point perspective."

Left: This image, Drone, was an early example of Tim's affinity with *Painter*. "It was a fairly new program for me at the time," he says."I started with a pencil sketch and rendered it with *Painter*. Now I would probably draw it in *Painter* as well."





Ontario, "Probably the biggest turning point in my career." At the interview Tim first encountered his comrade at arms, Dan Wheaton, the man who "played the biggest role in introducing me to digital media." In that respect Dan played a blinder.

"They asked me how I felt about working digitally," recalls Tim. "I said I wouldn't really like that." This response didn't faze the interview panel, "They just said I should give it a go and if I didn't like it I could set up my easel in the corner somewhere." They were fairly confident of a conversion.

Tim is a little embarrassed by this story: "I still can't believe that was just three years ago!" The fact that Tim's introduction to digital production is such a recent thing says a lot for his talent. A random selection of works from **[w]** www.thenextside.com shows he's outdistanced most of the competition in just that short time.

Though Tim spends his day producing art destined for the smallest screen in the business – the mobile phone – his ambitions lie at the other end of the scale: "I'm gunning hard to make it as a matte painter." Despite his stated love of guns and robots, Tim has a very painterly style. As proof he cites the 19th century French artist Adolphe William Bouguereau as an important influence, particularly in terms of colour palette. What Bouguereau would make of robot beetles wielding laser canons is difficult to determine, but the chances are he would approve of the sense of awe and scale which emanates from Tim's widescreen vision of the future.

Learning curve

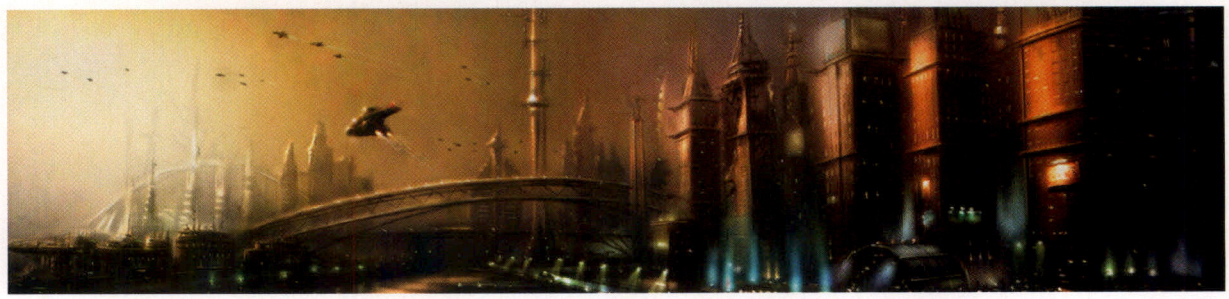
Working for feature films involves a lot of different angles. "It's been a fairly steep learning curve," agrees Tim. "Matte painting isn't just about the painting, there's 3D and compositing which has to be taken into account." Learning one of those is a full-time job, and that's where the internet comes in.

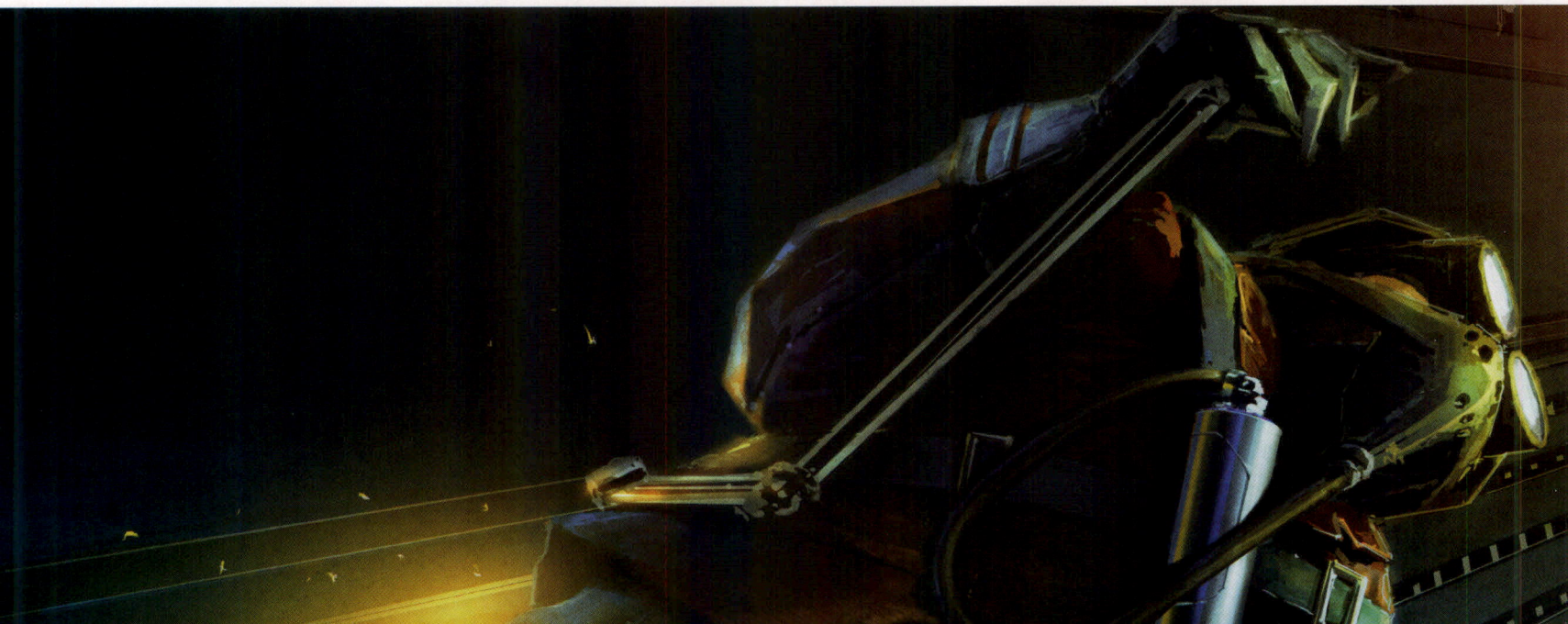
"The amount of information out there is insane," says Tim. "The genre just feeds itself." Forums such as **[w]** www.mattepainting.org and **[w]** www.cgtalk.com provide young artists with the kind of tuition and support that was only available to a select few just a generation before.

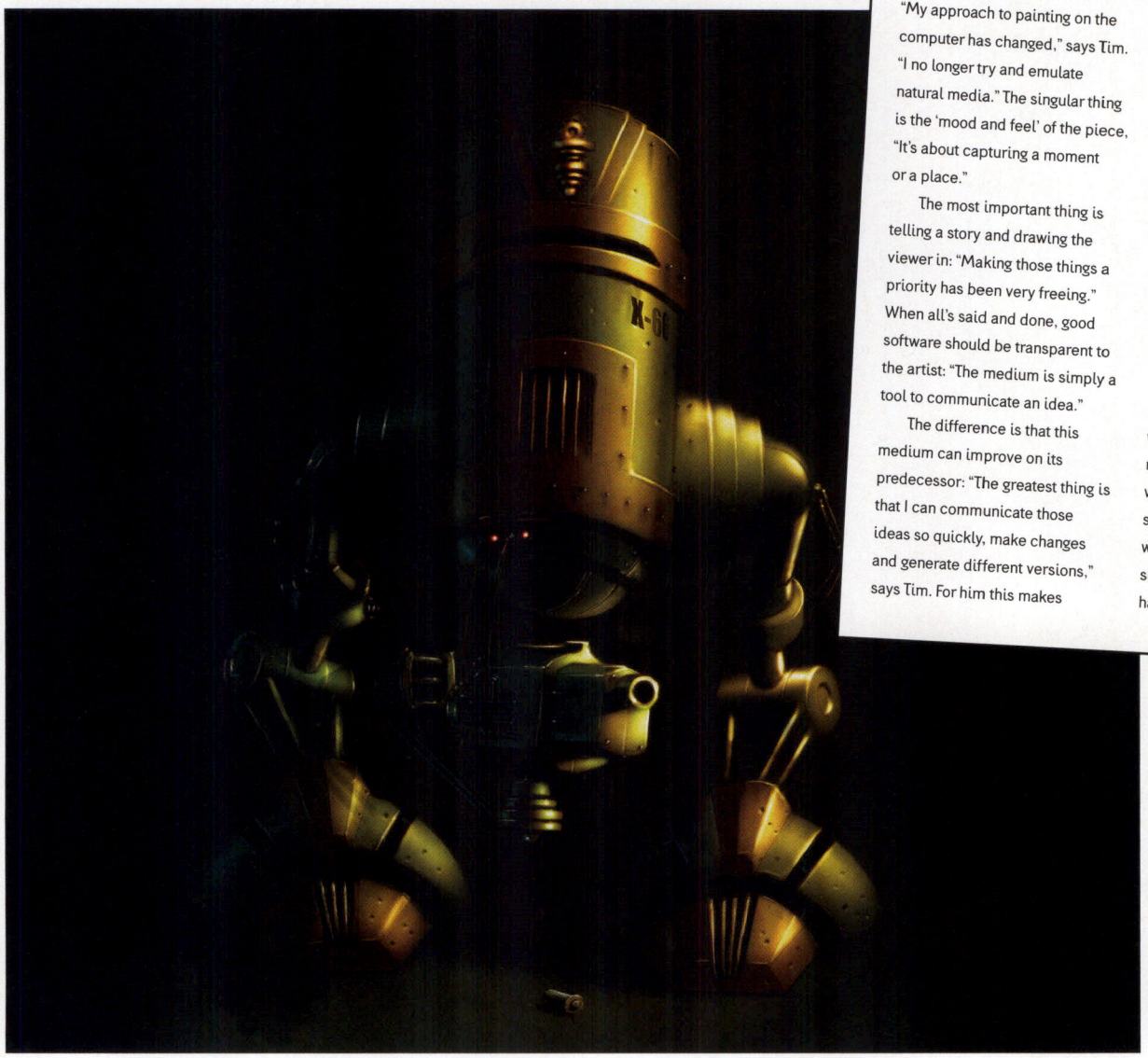
The influence of the big names such as Feng Zhu and Ryan Church are bound to have an important effect, and Tim doesn't deny that his own work owes much to the *Star Wars* aesthetic, but he believes that "If you're doing this over and over, you inevitably bring some part of yourself to it." Eventually it's all you. **ca-p**

Above: R-34 started out as a drawing with no plans to go any further. "Then I thought it could use a bit of colour. A little colour became a lot of colour... you know how it goes."

Right: TheNextSide, done for Tim's site of the same name, is another early work. "It's very loose," he says of it's style, "but I still like the feel of it."







Freedom from the medium

"My approach to painting on the computer has changed," says Tim. "I no longer try and emulate natural media." The singular thing is the 'mood and feel' of the piece, "It's about capturing a moment or a place."

The most important thing is telling a story and drawing the viewer in: "Making those things a priority has been very freeing." When all's said and done, good software should be transparent to the artist: "The medium is simply a tool to communicate an idea."

The difference is that this medium can improve on its predecessor: "The greatest thing is that I can communicate those ideas so quickly, make changes and generate different versions," says Tim. For him this makes experimentation hard to avoid. "I try new things far more often and end up with things that would have taken much longer working traditionally," he says.

The young Tim Warnock was of a different mind though: "I had been introduced to programs like *Photoshop* in high school but never realised the potential." Early encounters with a Wacom tablet and *Photoshop 5* only made things worse.

There was also a question of precedent: "All my instructors were traditional guys and I modelled myself after them." The wheel has turned full circle, those same role models today are all working digitally, a reassuring situation for Tim: "Not the only one happily eating my words."

Left: By day a humble artist, "By night I'm slowly building a robot army to take over the world." This ambition is tempered by the domestic: "I have to stop when my wife tells me to do the dishes." In a display of remarkable hubris Tim adds, "I know deep down she loves my robots as much as I do."

Below: Rocket Man, "Redefining the landscape of mobile entertainment." According to Tim, this sums up the vertiginous message in this picture.

Tutorial

[illustration] Tim Warnock [w] www.thenextside.com

Painting an eerie goblin world

Conceptualise a filmmaker's vision by using *Painter IX* to build up atmosphere and dramatic lighting, and bring a goblin world to life...

In November of 2004, Tim Warnock of TheNextSide was approached by Art Director Joel Pain of Fierce Entertainment to work on his fantasy film *Goblins*.

The assignment was to create a concept painting of a goblin settlement. In the film, goblins are nasty creatures that stand about four feet high and live in tree stumps that have been hollowed out by fire.

The brief for the goblin city was that it should look like a cancer in the middle of the forest, where all life had been destroyed. Drawings provided by Fierce Entertainment of a typical goblin habitat were used for reference, but a fair amount of licence was given to interpret these images in any way, as long as they looked foreboding. The challenge for this project was to steer clear of making the houses look cute and become immersed in this fantasy until the goblin world came to life.

Over the next four pages, you'll see in detail how Tim went about creating this dark vision of the goblins' habitat. >

Expertise provided by Tim Warnock, concept artist and matte painter at TheNextSide, [w] www.thenextside.com.

All the components needed to complete this tutorial can be found on the *Computer Arts Projects* CD73 in the Software\Tutorials\Tutorial files\Tutorial files\All\Goblin world folder.

Part 1: Setting up your composition

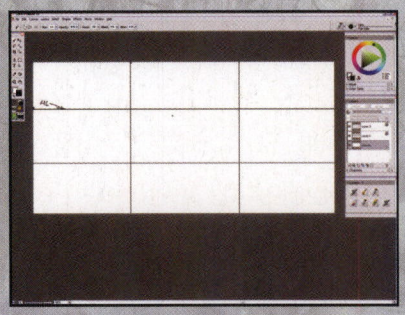
Create a document in *Painter* and start adding colour to your canvas...

Spinning canvas

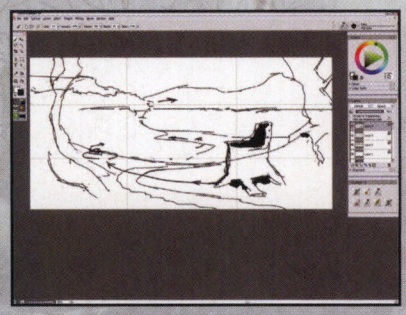
A nice feature in *Painter* is that you can spin your canvas by holding down Spacebar+Alt on PC and Spacebar+Option on a Mac. This enables you to move your arm on a horizontal axis all the time. Typically the hardest thing about drawing on the computer is that you are not able to spin the page the way you would a sketchbook in real life. Well now you can!

Glow effects

The Glow Brush is excellent for building up dramatic lighting. It lightens and saturates toward whatever colour is selected in the colour wheel. The lighter the colour, the greater the brightness. The more saturated the colour, the greater the saturation. It's best to start with a dark and desaturated colour and make subtle adjustments.



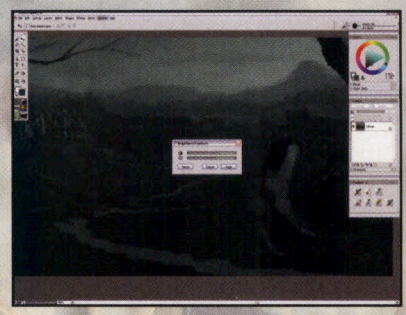
1 Begin by opening a new document in *Painter* at 1,000x500. To establish a framework for the composition, divide the canvas into thirds with vertical and horizontal lines. The upper horizontal line will be the horizon line.



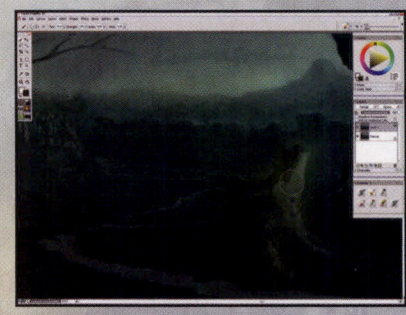
2 Using Pens>Flat Colour, quickly indicate the major scene elements, being conscious of the division of the page. Try to establish a sequence of shapes that will lead the viewer's eye through the image, and avoid any lines that will lead the viewer off the page.

3 Create three new layers and set their transparency to 30 per cent. Using Pens>Flat Colour with 100 per cent black, block in the silhouettes of the foreground, mid-ground, and background, each on its own layer. Play with the transparency to establish a good division of value.

4 Using Artists Oils>Dry Brush, begin to block in the painting, sampling from your values on the page with the Eyedropper tool. For the moment, the light source is coming from the right side and it's low to the ground. Keeping this in mind, loosely define the shapes in the scene.



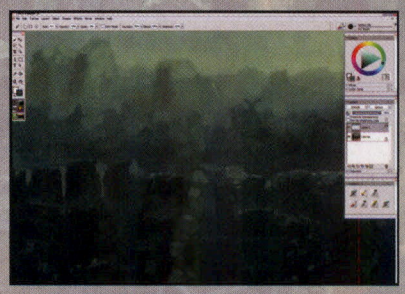
5 Create a new layer and fill it with a dark, fairly saturated green colour. Flatten the composition by selecting Layers>Drop All. Choose Effects>Tonal Control>Brightness/Contrast and boost the contrast and brightness to punch up the lights and darks. Dark blues and greens are a good choice here.



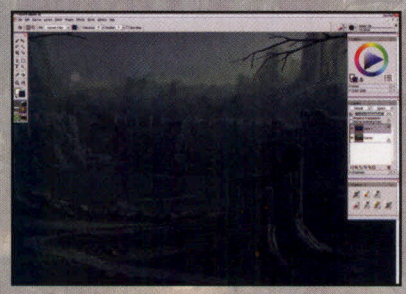
6 Select all and cut and paste. Zoom in and align your layers using the arrow keys to nudge it into place. Add light using FX>Glow Brush with the colour set to a very dark orange (almost black) and a large size. Vary the hue to divide subtle colour shifts. Then erase the dark areas to re-establish the shadows.

Part 2: Defining shapes and atmosphere

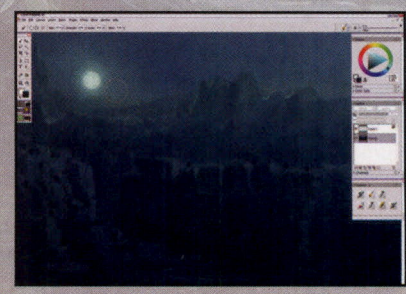
Start to build up detail in your image to create a dark and menacing atmosphere...



1 Use Artist's Oils>Dry Brush to build up detail in the image using the Eyedropper to sample colour from the canvas. Keeping in mind the direction of your light source, begin to define highlight and shadow areas.



2 Create a new layer. Using the Paint Bucket tool, fill the layer with a dark blue colour and set the transparency to 30 per cent. Using the Eraser, softly pull back some of the warmer colour on the far right of the canvas to give the effect of the sun rising and creating a secondary light source. This needs to be very subtle. Go to Layers>Drop All.



3 Repeat the process from Step 6 above to duplicate the layer. Set the colour wheel to H:84, S:42, V:8. Use the Glow Brush to accentuate the lighting from the moon. Build the intensity of the lighting closest to the moon so that it falls off gradually. Accentuate the faces of shapes that would pick up the lighting from the moon. Use the Eraser to redefine shadow areas.

Part 3: Refining your composition

Do some more detailed work on the goblin homes, and add texture and light...

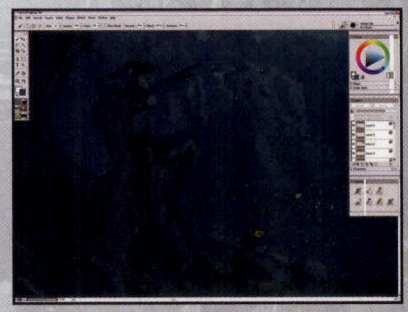
Resizing your canvas

Before refining the composition, resize your canvas to 4,000x2,000 pixels. Working at small sizes initially prevents the computer from getting bogged down. Once the rough painting is done, resize the image so that finer detail can be rendered.

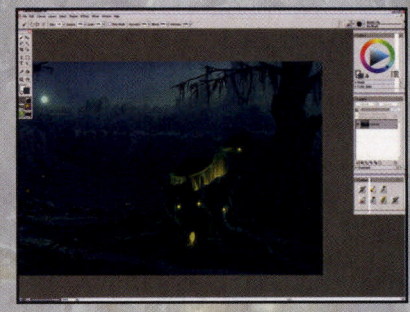
Collect textures

Keeping a collection of random textures is a great habit to get into. Carry a digital camera with you to take shots of textures that inspire you. You can use these to enhance your paintings but also for reference when working on different lighting conditions.

1 The valley is filled with tons of little goblin homes. On a new layer, using Artists Oils>Dry Brush, indicate detail to establish the positioning of each home. Sample colour from the darkest parts of the image to use as your base colour for each home. Choose a desaturated yellow and dab small dots on the tops of the homes for the glow of the fire inside.



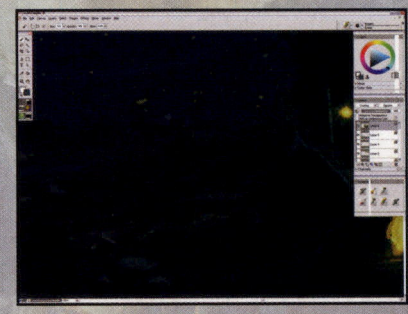
2 Begin to refine the shapes of the goblin homes in the foreground. Make the shapes twisted and gnarled, and add mushrooms to some roofs. Using a dark desaturated red, paint the silhouette of the mushrooms and begin to establish some detail on the ground such as rocks, roots and sticks. Keep all the colours subdued and desaturated.



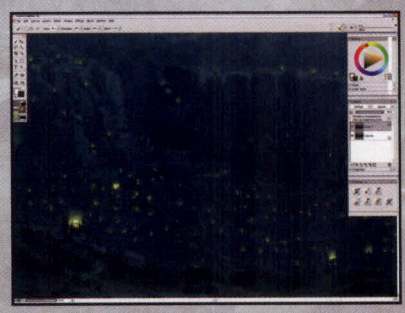
3 Go to Layers>Drop All. To create fire within the homes, repeat the process of Step 6 again and use the Glow Brush to build up yellow and orange beams of light. The light should catch the rim of the mushroom and be more intense near the bottom of the stump. Keep the glow of the fire bright yellow, and vary the colour between oranges, reds and yellows. Use the Eraser to redefine the shadows.

4 Open the trees.jpg image found on the *Computer Arts Projects* CD73. Go to Select>All and then Edit>Copy. Then paste the tree image into your composition.

5 Set Layer Attribute to Overlay and Layer Transparency to 45 per cent. Using the Layer Adjuster move the layer so that interesting texture is overlaying the foreground elements. Repeat with a new layer containing the tree's image to build up texture. Adjust the layer transparency for a subtle effect and apply Sharpen under Effects>Focus.



6 Using the Eraser tool, remove from the texture layer the darkest areas of the image – for example, the darkest side of the roots and rocks. The final effect should resemble moss on the ground. Refer to Texture.PSD on the CD to see how the layering should look.



7 Go to Layers>Drop All. Repeat the process from Step 6 on the opposite page to duplicate the layer. Using the Glow Brush, begin to add luminance to the light in the valley. Use the Eraser to push some of the light back. Be careful not to over lighten the valley, because the houses furthest away would not be perceived as being as bright as those in the foreground. Go to Layers>Drop All.

8 On a new layer, using Artists Oils>Dry Brush, begin to define rim light on the edges of the trees and rocks in the foreground. It's important to not use the Glow Brush or Air Brush for too much of the lighting but to sometimes use a hard edge brush to render more defined edges. Sample colour from the far side of the valley with your Eyedropper tool to get the colour for your highlights. Use your Eraser to push back any highlights that are too prominent.

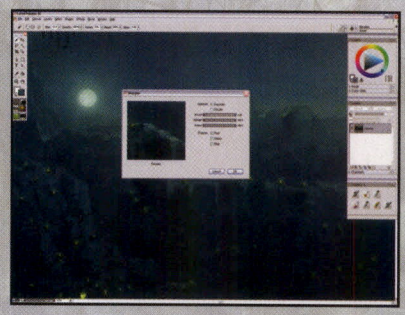
9 On a new layer, go to Cloners>Straight Cloner, and sample from the sky by holding down Alt or Option. Paint over the riverbed, repositioning your cloned source periodically to create variation so the water doesn't look like an exact reflection of the sky. Using Blenders>Smear, push some of the river around to create ripples in the image. Erase out of the river layer to clean up the edges of the riverbed and uncover branches. Refer to Texture.PSD on the CD.

Part 4: More details

Now add more details to the background, mid-ground and foreground of your composition...

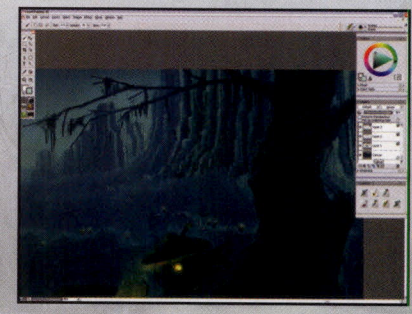
Flipping your canvas

The eye gets used to looking at things over time and it becomes easy to miss problems with perspective. By flipping the canvas, the eye is forced to reanalyse everything, so make a habit of flipping your canvas to catch perspective issues as they arise.



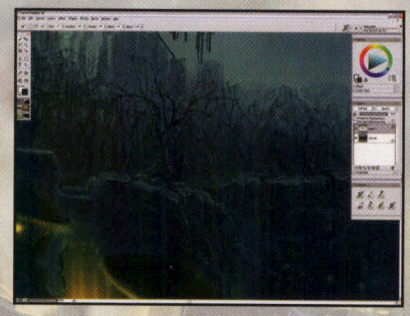
1 Resize the canvas to 6,600x3,300 pixels. Go to Effect>Focus>Sharpen and set the amount to 3. Working with the Glow Brush a lot tends to soften the image. Periodically running a Sharpen filter brings back some detail.

2 Create a new layer. Use the Eyedropper tool to sample from the lighter parts of the sky around the moon. With Artists Oils>Dry Brush, begin to define the highlights across the tops of the rocks. Then sample from the mid-tone parts of the rocks and sharpen up the different faces of the rocks, creating shadow, mid-tone and highlight areas.

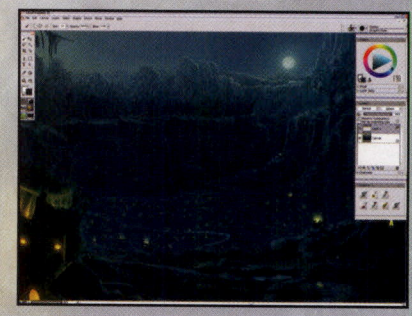


3 When painting elements of the background, paint over the foreground elements such as tree branches. Once you've finished, reduce the opacity of the background layer enough to see the elements you've painted over. Then use your Eraser to make the foreground elements visible again. Bring the opacity of the background back up to 100 per cent.

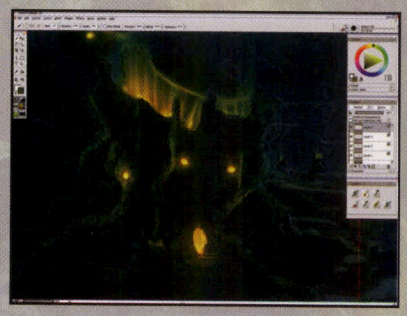
4 Create a new layer. Sample with the Eyedropper tool from the darkest areas of the image. Using Artists Oils>Dry Brush, roughly paint in a tree line. When satisfied with the position and scale of the trees, reduce the layer opacity to 50 per cent. Create a new layer and draw more defined trees in front. This will give the illusion of depth.



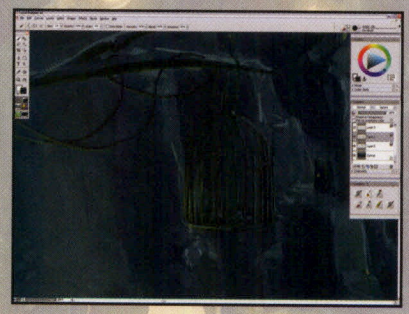
5 In another new layer create a few trees with even more definition. The viewer's eye will be drawn to these, giving the image a greater sense of depth. Sharpen the rocks closest to the edge by adding some sharp highlights. Sample the shadow parts of the rock, and create cuts and crevices that will create a more random and organic look.



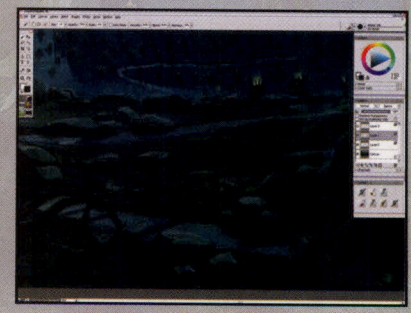
6 On a new layer, repeat the cloning process in Part 3, Step 9 to create the river running through the bottom of the valley. Be conscious of where the light from the moon would fall on the river versus where the shadow from the rocks would cause the river to be darker. Clean up the edges of the river with the Eraser tool.



7 On a new layer, begin to add detail to the goblins' houses in the foreground. Play up the detail that was a result of the overlayed textures, bringing out edges by accentuating highlights and creating cuts and twists in the roots by accentuating shadows. Again, be conscious of the different light sources in the scene and the temperature of light that they cast.



8 Use the Artists Oils>Dry Brush on a new layer to create a small cage hanging from a branch protruding from the goblin's house. Begin by defining a silhouette of the cage, then give it dimension by adding cool highlights from the moon-side of the cage and warm highlights cast from the fire's glow inside the goblin's house.

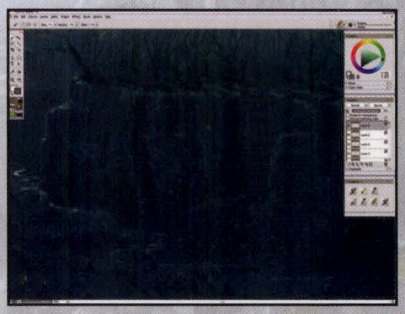


9 Go over the ground plane in the foreground and clean up objects that are too soft. On a new layer, simply sample from the image and sharpen up edges on rocks and highlights on roots. Make sure that proper cast shadows are under the rocks to make them look like they're sitting on the ground. Again, use the texture and the image to find details and push it back in places if necessary.

Part 5: Shadow and light adjustments

Play around with the shadows in the composition and get the overall lighting right...

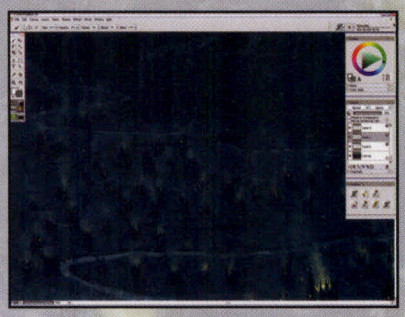
1 Go to Layers>Drop All. Duplicate the layer. On the side of the valley closest to camera, use the Glow Brush to create a bluish light cast. Erase what would be the shadow cast from the wall on the far side of the valley as well as the goblin houses that sit in the light. Also erase an indication of the trees on the top of the valley wall. Vary the opacity of the Eraser when adding the tree shadows so that the shadow isn't too sharp. Go to Layers>Drop All.



2 Sample the darkest part of your image with the Eyedropper. Using the Air Brush>Fine Tip Soft Air 50, darken the crevices in the rock of the valley wall on a new layer. Then with the Eraser sharpen the edges of the crevices. If the crevices appear too prominent, simply reduce the opacity of the Eraser tool to 10 per cent and lightly dab here and there to push back areas that look too strong.

3 Using the Air Brush, create cast shadows from the trees. Use the Eraser to sharpen up the edges of the shadows and push back any parts of the shadow that appear too strong. Also darken the shadow side of the tree trunks where needed. Depending on where the tree is sitting, be conscious of sampling from the shadow areas around that tree so that it makes sense within the space that it's in, and isn't too dark or too light.

4 Create a new layer. Use the Eyedropper tool to sample from the light blue colour of the distant hills. With the Air Brush>Fine Tip Soft Air 50, begin to shape smoke coming from within the houses. Consider how the smoke would hit the underside of the mushroom and curl around it. In the Layers palette, select Preserve Transparency. Make the colour lighter, further towards yellow. Using the Air Brush, lighten the smoke that is closest to the light.

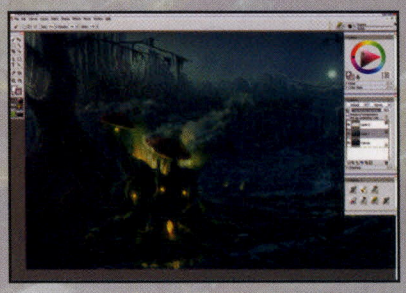


5 Turn Preserve Transparency off, and create a new layer. Sampling a colour from the distant hills again, create puffs of smoke rising from the goblin houses in the valley. Use the Eraser to push back the smoke furthest away and to define edges in the smoke so that it doesn't look too soft. Repeat the process in the previous step to lighten the portion of the smoke closest to the light.

6 To create a ground haze make a new layer. Using the colour sample from the distant hills, paint with the Air Brush to form tongues of smoke. Making smoke believable is a balance of soft and hard edges as well as creating a luminance where light hits it as it's semi-transparent. This is accomplished with the same process as Step 4, turning on Preserve Transparency and playing with the lightness and darkness. See Smoke.PSD on the CD.

7 Create a new layer, then using Artists Oils>Dry Brush and by sampling the highlights in the valley walls, define the edges of the foreground trees accentuating the texture in the bark. For the moon-side of the trees sample from the cool lighting in the image. For the side of the tree facing the rising sun, sample the warm lighting in the image.

8 Go to Layers>Drop All, then create a duplicate layer. Use the Glow Brush to add subtle glows cast from the light within the goblin houses. Areas to note are the smoke rising out of the house, the edges of the roof, and the walls of the house. Use the Eraser to sharpen up edges that have been softened by the Glow Brush. All of these will have a greater dimension if these subtle details are included.



9 Go to Layers>Drop All. Once again, use the Glow Brush to create bloom or light glow from the rising sun. The light is coming from off-camera and cutting through the tree branches and the mountain on the far side of the valley. Vary the colour between oranges, reds and pinks to give volume to the lighting. Gently erase out the shadows cut by the tree branches. Finish by accentuating the beam of light with the airbrush. See FinalLighting02.psd on the CD. ca-p

[image] *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* © Disney Enterprises, Inc. & Spyglass Entertainment, LLC. All rights reserved.

Concept art for movies

Ever considered a career producing the designs that shape the look of cool science fiction and fantasy movies? We take a closer look at this exciting but highly demanding digital illustration niche...

Without proper planning and refinement, the results of most creative endeavours will rarely be of much use. It's why painters through the ages have sketched out their ideas first. And it's why so many visually driven industries – from video-game development to car and furniture design – rely on concept artwork to outline the basic form, feel, dimensions, colour schemes and textures that will drive and inspire the remainder of the design process.

Perhaps the most exciting use of all for concept art is in the film industry, where these designs can prove just as influential as the movie script for establishing the look and mood of each and every filmed sequence. The greater the emphasis on outlandish visual elements, the more exciting and vital the work of the concept artist. Not surprisingly, it's science fiction and fantasy movies that provide the most (and most interesting) opportunities for the concept artist.

The most crucial differences between producing concept art for film and working as a professional artist in any other area inevitably arise from the scale of movie projects. Few other entertainment fields bring together so many creatives. And none are so expensive to produce or are micromanaged so keenly for profit. This impacts on the role of the concept artist in two significant ways.

One is the loss of creative control. Certainly concept artists are employed for their wild imaginations, but it's important to remember that they ultimately serve a higher purpose, and so must exercise their creativity within parameters defined by other people. Even the likes of H R Giger have seen their designs diluted or discarded in the past.

Imaginative ideas

"The final result of our work is not the drawing, but the idea," stresses Feng Zhu ([w] www.artbyfeng.com), a highly regarded designer who recently worked on *Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith*. "The audience is not paying to see our sketches, but rather, the finished film," he continues. "Our artwork is useless once the design has been taken to the finished level. We are always designers first, artists second."

Then there's the need to focus. Some concept designers are required to depict scenes and themes in broad strokes, but often there's intensive work to be done on very specific props, costumes or visual effects sequences. Additionally, the scale and collaborative nature of film work means there's a tendency to work in teams. This isn't an environment for diva designers.

How teams work

"An art department for a movie has anywhere from three to ten concept artists," says Christian Lorenz Scheurer ([w] www.christianlorenzscheurer.com, [w] www.thegnomonworkshop.com/dvds/csc01.html), a celebrated concept artist who has worked on such prestigious film projects as *The Fifth Element*, *The Matrix*, *Dark City* and *The Day After Tomorrow*. He explains that this team contributes to the film's pre-visualisation stage. "Once it's greenlit, the post-production houses get involved, and often a new set of concept artists is hired to design specific environments and effects. Recently, though, studios like the animation houses and places like ILM have been consolidating all the production stages."

Feng Zhu says that teams are generally divided up according to each artist's own particular strengths: "Some will design man-made, 'hard surface' designs, such as environments, props and vehicles. Others will concentrate on organic, soft surface things, such as creatures and characters. But, of course, there is always some crossover, so we ultimately tend to work in both areas."

Over at animation studio Blue Sky Studios ([w] www.blueskystudios.com), illustrator Daisuke 'Dice' Tsutsumi ([w] www.simplestroke.com) recently completed concept design work on fantasy comedy *Robots*. His involvement on the movie highlights how other kinds of crossover can also be expected. "I was a colour key artist for both *Ice Age* and *Robots*, defining scene lighting with my colour sketches," says Daisuke. "I was also one of the main visual development artists on *Robots* right at the start. That basically involved providing your ideas of how to tell the story through illustrations. It's very similar to producing children's book illustrations, really."

Above: A digital concept design created by Feng Zhu (pictured right). "Working digitally gives you a lot more freedom, with the main aid being the undo key," he says. "We can experiment with our designs without worrying about messing anything up, and we can also apply textures or photo-scrap into our paintings."

While computer graphics have been a staple of movie post-production for two decades now, their widespread use during the pre-production phase has been a much more recent occurrence. Part of the reason for the slow uptake has been inertia, but it's also taken some time for technology to advance to a point where artists are able to produce concept designs with the same degree of freedom as they could with traditional media.

Digital pre-production

"Digital painting media has changed the world of illustration completely in the past five to ten years," says Daisuke. "Traditionally trained artists can now achieve the same look in packages like *Photoshop* and *Painter*, using natural, intuitive strokes, but working with tremendous speed and greater flexibility."

While some concept art is first sketched by hand and then scanned into the computer, there's no doubt that the rest of the creative process is faster when done digitally. "We don't have to wash brushes, mix our paints, or wait for canvases to dry," says Feng Zhu. "All we need now is a fast

The art of the Animatrix

Originally conceived as part of the *Matrix Revolutions* script, *The Animatrix: Final Flight of the Osiris* was created by a small faction of the Square USA team following its work on the movie *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*.

"Working within a reduced staff of about 40, I was in charge of designing the 'Real World'," says Christian Scheurer. "In the first *Matrix* it consisted of only a couple of tunnels. The task was to create an enormous destroyed city featuring a large ominous crater, where drillers start their journey to Zion. In addition, I was assigned to pre-visualise the massive sentinel armies which would snake like silver eels through the crater."

Christian says he was given full creative freedom when producing the concept designs, taking inspiration from a description from one of the Wachowski brothers of "a city looking like tombstones of an old graveyard, marked by heavy machinegun fire."

"I started by creating nine conceptual paintings based on very simple 3D block models," says Christian. "What started as concept art actually got used as final matte paintings, and I ended up as a lead matte painter working alongside Richard Mahon (who worked on the *Matrix* sequels) and Kazunori Nakazawa, a fantastic mechanical designer from Japan."

Below: Digital concept art created by Christian Scheurer for *Final Flight of the Osiris*. Scheurer embraced digital techniques while working on previous project *Final Fantasy IX*. "I personally now like to paint in the computer, but I still return to the drawing board every so often," he says.

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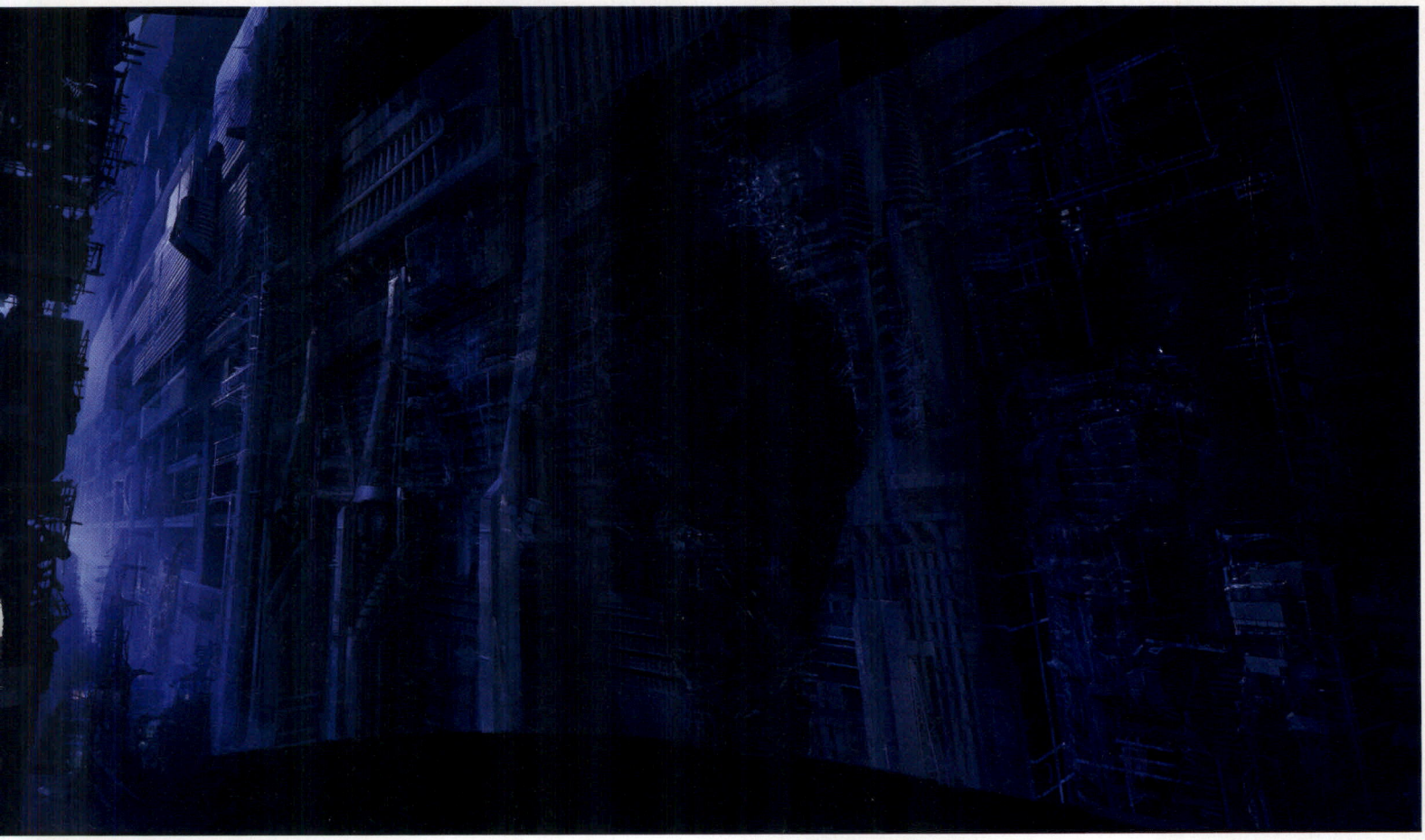

computer, good graphics software, and a Wacom tablet. We can basically go onto any project and immediately start working without a ton of art supplies."

Improvements in CG for post-production widen the possibilities for concept artists, too. As Feng Zhu points out, a movie such as *Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith* simply wouldn't have been viable a decade ago: "The scope George Lucas wanted wasn't achievable with the technology at the time. These days, we have no limits to what we can design. It is now up to our imagination, not technology, to govern our ideas."

"Software is just another tool, though," he cautions. "Going digital doesn't make you 'better'. A lot of students or impatient designers want to go digital right away, and get frustrated as a result. They forget that most of the artists today, who work digitally, come from a traditional background. It is experience that makes these artists professional, not the software or the process."

3D technologies

One interesting repercussion of the switch to digital is that concept designers are now also able to embrace 3D technologies. At the most basic level, applications such as *Maya*, *3ds max*, *Cinema 4D* and *XSI* can be used as perspective aids, but many designers now integrate 3D renders and *Photoshop/Painter* freeform elements far more thoroughly.

"There's still a place for concept work created purely in *Photoshop*, but I think 3D is now one of the more exciting ways to communicate ideas and at the same time save money on productions," suggests Joel Collins, Art Director on *Hitchhiker's Guide* and Co-founder of new studio Painting Practice (**[w]** www.paintingpractice.com).

"A lot of 2D concept artists work from a graphical point of view, rather than a filmmaker's," adds studio Co-founder Dan May. "They really need to be in tune with the designs that will be drawn from their work."

The aim of Painting Practice is to combine concept work and pre-viz, making the studio a 'one-stop-shop for pre-production'. "We're also able to build up a good 3D arsenal," says May. "We've been working with 3D for a long time now, so have a strong collection of models that give us a sort of virtual studio to work with."

The benefits of working in such a creatively led field as concept design are easy to fathom. It's a career that can also be surprisingly lucrative for those in greatest demand. "Top film designers receive anything from $2,500 to 5,000 per week, usually working 11 hours a day," reveals Christian Scheurer.

Getting into the industry

For illustrators looking for a career in concept design but unsure how to get a foot in the door, Scheurer's own story is heartening. Inspired to leave his native Brussels for Los Angeles after a near fatal lightning strike, he quickly found employment at Digital Domain. "It was probably my naivety combined with a kind of unbound enthusiasm which got me my first job there," he recalls. "It also helped to physically show up at the studio doors instead of just sending a resumé to human resources. I'd advise trying to arrange meetings with art directors and producers even if they aren't hiring at that moment in time. And you should always ask for advice and feedback."

A little self-promotion can also go a long way, and it's easier than ever to advertise your talents without any real outlay. The

Right: Digital illustrations by Daisuke Tsutsumi (pictured below), a concept designer who recently worked on the animated fantasy movie *Robots*. "Most of us at Blue Sky Studios' concept department came in with no digital painting experience," he reveals. "It doesn't really matter, there will always be a place for good illustrators in this industry."

internet effectively provides an international gallery for a portfolio. Anybody can quickly create a professional looking website, while posting on public forums such as those at CG Talk ([w] www.cgtalk.com) and ConceptArt ([w] www.Conceptart.org) offer great opportunities for advertising and useful networking.

Competing for work

Ultimately, though, it's those artistic skills that matter the most. Feng Zhu points out that concept design for film is a very competitive area, with only a limited number of films in production at any one time (and those produced in Hollywood only employ unionised designers). Only the best and most determined artists and designers are ultimately destined to carve out a career for themselves in this exciting, inspiring and fast-moving field.

"Studios like to work with the same group of people, so it's difficult to penetrate this circle if your portfolio is weak," explains Feng. It should be equal or even better than the pros out there. In the end, there are no shortcuts. The more you draw, the better you'll become." ca-p

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Painting Practice founders Joel Collins and Dan May champion a more 3D reliant kind of concept design, one where a greater degree of accuracy greatly aids with pre-visualisation and post-production. Most recently they worked on art direction for *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* movie.

"The Director, Garth Jennings, created lovely little pencil roughs as a starting point, but we would then create the designs using *Cinema 4D*," explains Joel. "He'd then base his storyboards on what we'd built, and those boards would then feed back to us, helping us refine designs and remove every bit of fluff that was unnecessary or too expensive."

As well as providing data for pre-viz, this spatially accurate design work was also taken into *Photoshop*. "There we'd add the hand-drawn element, giving it a sense of 'life'," says Joel. "In the end, about 80 per cent of the Photoshopped images were created by painting over the 3D."

The data also proved valuable further down the line. "We exported all the planet factory elements like a Meccano kit, handing about two gigabytes of models to the post production team," says Dan. "I think they were surprised that an art department could hand them 3D files that could be used as more than a mere guide."

Above and below: Art Director Joel Collins suggests that blending traditional concept art with accurate 3D modelling makes for a more practical kind of pre-production design: "It's a different approach to just handing out a brief to a concept artist and letting them go crazy, producing something that often isn't practical within a film's budget."

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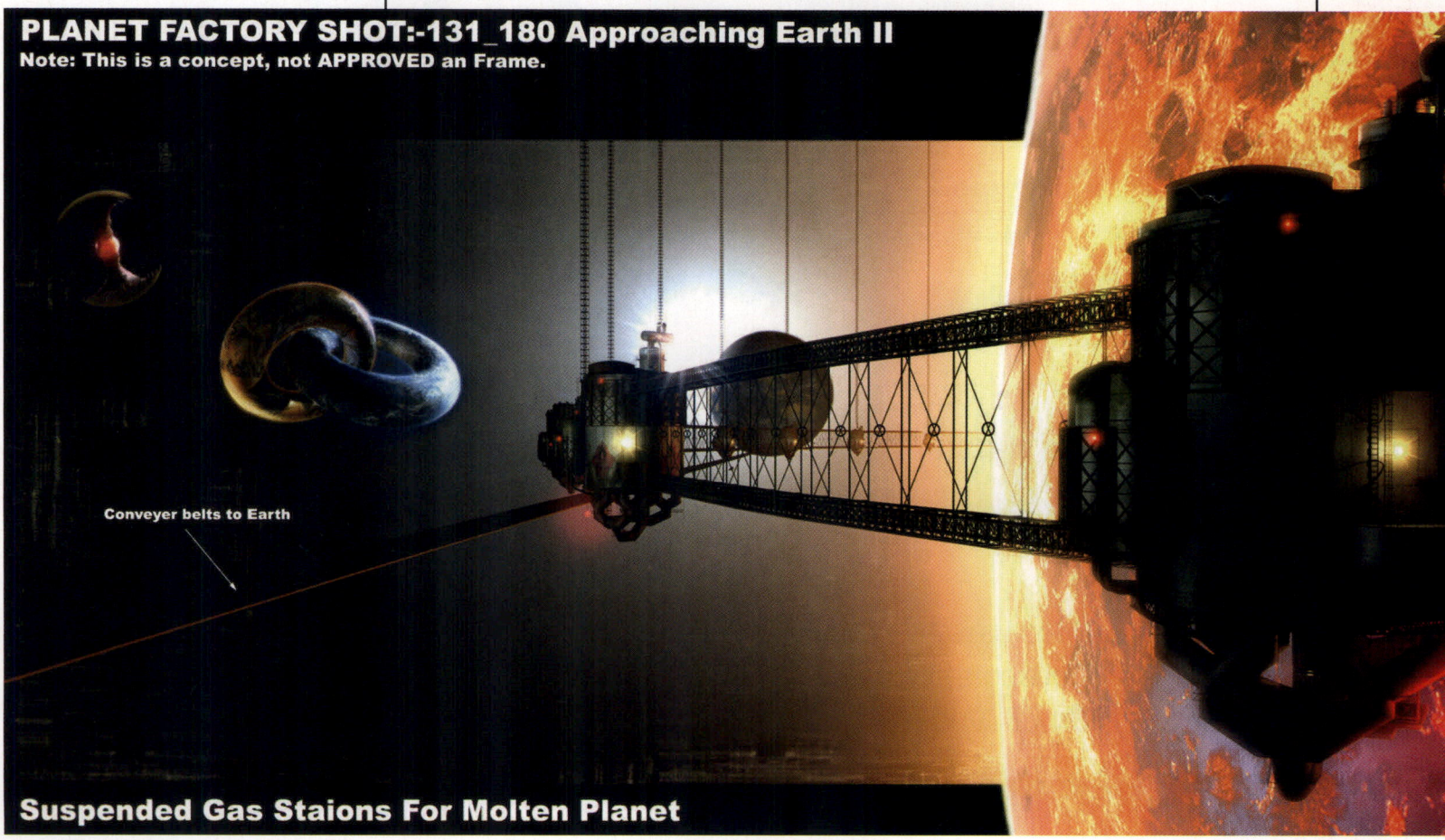
PLANET FACTORY SHOT:-131_180 Approaching Earth II
Note: This is a concept, not APPROVED an Frame.
Conveyer belts to Earth
Suspended Gas Staions For Molten Planet

BENT OUT OF SHAPE
TIED UP IN KNOTS
OUT OF THIS WORLD

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THE MAGAZINE FOR 3D ARTISTS
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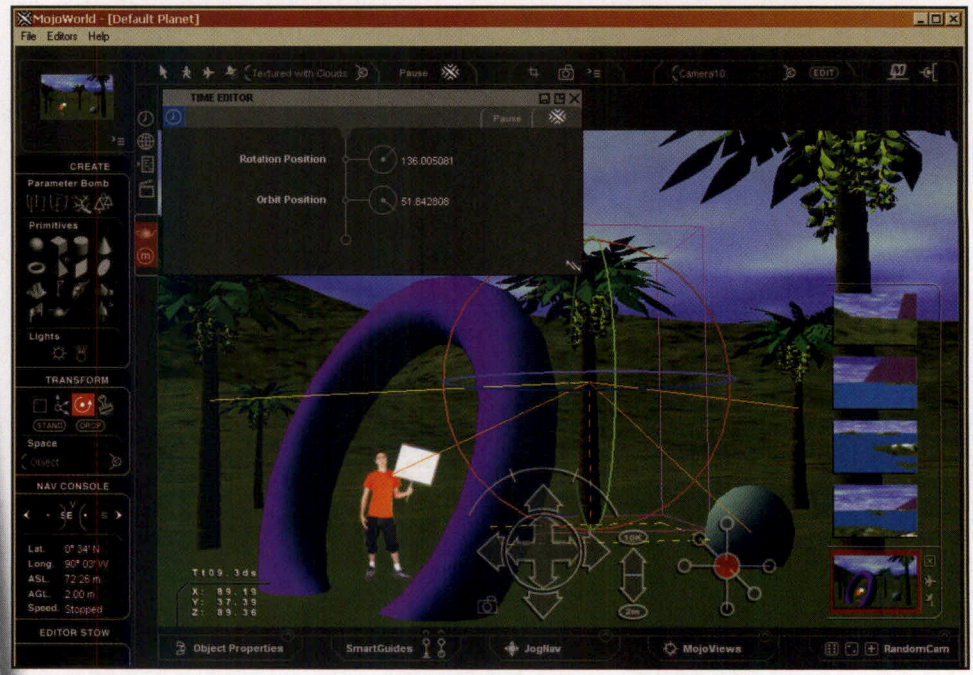
MojoWorld 2 SE

Create fantastic 3D landscapes using this free software from Pandromeda...

MojoWorld 2 SE is a fully functional Special Edition of Pandromeda's fractal-based world-building application *MojoWorld*, as sold for $149. See page 72 to find out exactly what the software enables you to do. In our tutorial, Lewis Moorcroft, a moderator for the *MojoWorld* community, shows you how to create and render a dramatic fantasy landscape.

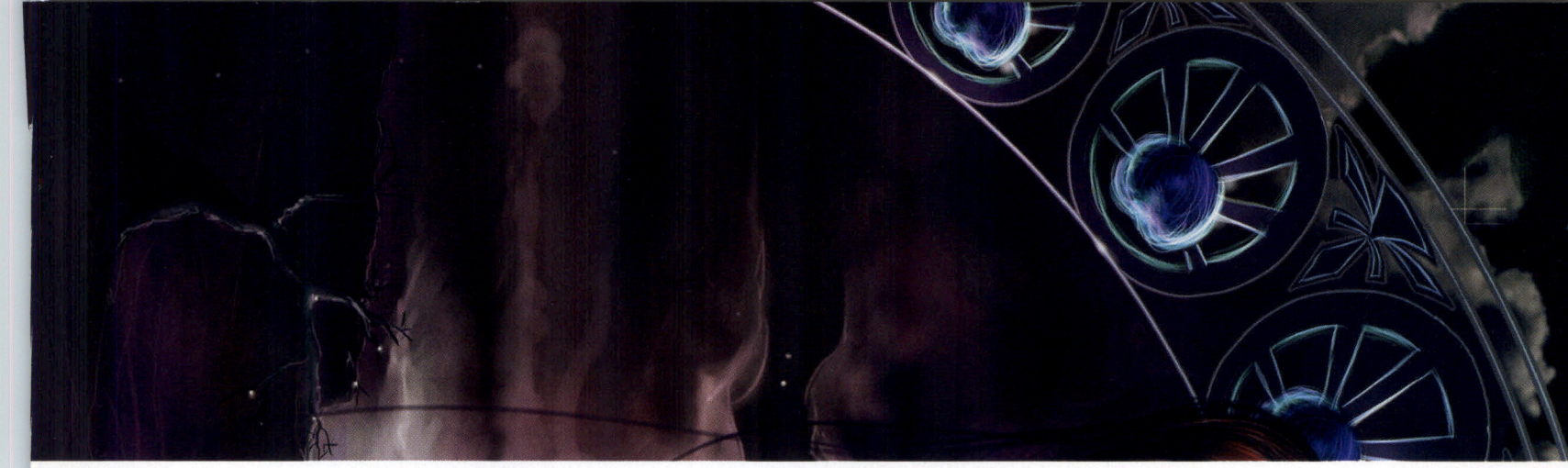
Once you've installed the software, you'll need to obtain a registration key. Simply click the 'Get Registration Key' button and you'll be taken to the website, where you should enter the following magazine code: cap073

If you like what you see of *MojoWorld 2 SE*, why not upgrade to the latest version of the software? In *MojoWorld 3*, tools for manipulating primitives and imported models have been dramatically improved. Version 3 also includes several new object types, such as pre-textured plant models, a PhotoBillboard of objects, a boulder tool and a gel spotlight. Other features include an updated planet wizard, fractal river networks, importing compatibility with a host of new file types including OBJ and 3DS, an increased content library, layout mode editor, precision object manipulation tools and much more...



More info...

Computer Arts Projects readers can upgrade to *MojoWorld 3* for 20 per cent less than the retail price by entering 'cap073' at **[w]** www.eovia.com/offers/mojo.htm. Visit Pandromeda at **[w]** www.pandromeda.com.



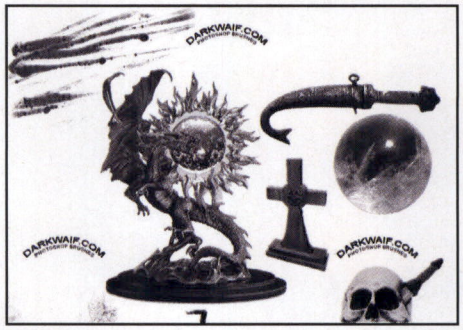
Essential fantasy resources

Use these free brushes, landscapes, fonts, models and more to spice up your fantasy images...

This month we bring you a collection of over 200 brushes from the Darkwaif Phantasy Gallery, including brains, daggers, halloween and angels. You'll also find a selection of sky images on the CD from Pixel Perfect Digital. If you find these useful, check out the company's website for free textures, illustrations, tutorials and a host of other useful material. In addition, Spectral Design has provided some quality 3D-generated landscapes to show you what can be achieved with the right tools and skill set.

And where would a fantasy issue be without some 3D fantasy models? On the CD you'll find six *Poser* characters from 3-D-models, which has just released a new anatomy library on its website. We also bring you ten PoserWorld items.

Please note that the above are not for resale.



More info...

http://orion.lunarpages.com/~darkwa2/index.html, www.pixelperfectdigital.com, www.spectral-design.net , www.cacheforce.com, www.poserworld.com, www.3-d-models.com

Video training

Learn digital art skills with this array of video tutorials...

This issue's free video tutorial toolkit contains sample videos showing you how to improve your *Bryce 5.5* and *Painter IX* skills.

Lynda.com has provided a chapter from the retail version of *Getting Started with Corel Painter IX*, narrated by Tanya Staples and John Derry. The subject of the chapter is painting and it covers a number of digital techniques including painting with artists oils, digital watercolour, liquid ink and airbrushes.

The second batch of video training is taken from BryceTech's tutorial DVD for *Bryce 5.5*. The tutorial explains some of the basics techniques for creating great models and landscapes in DAZ Productions' flagship 3D software application.

More info...

www.lynda.com, www.3dcommune.com/3d/store/display.mv?vs_bt_cdprod

DAZ|Studio (Beta)

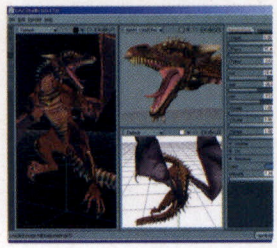
Create great digital graphics with ease...

DAZ|Studio is a free software application that enables you to create beautiful digital art easily. You can use this software to load in people, animals, vehicles, buildings, props and accessories to create your digital scenes.

DAZ|Studio includes two pre-configured scenes ready for you to 'Load & Render' into the program. Just double-click on the scene thumbnails in *DAZ|Studio* and everything will appear on screen posed, lit and ready for you to create a stunning digital image.

On the DAZ website you'll also find a Spot Render tool and a set of 'Load & Render' scene files that includes the Victoria 3 Reduced Resolution figure, clothing, hair, props, a complete 360-degree photo-realistic environment and dragonfly.

The full resolution models for Victoria 3.0 and Michael 3.0 can be downloaded free from the DAZ website along with a host of other models and items that are well worth checking out. ca-p



More info...

www.daz3d.com

On the CD...

Full contents on page 96

Full products

- *MojoWorld 2 SE*
- *Daz|Studio (Beta)*

Resources

- 80 Gothic fonts
- Seven fantasy landscapes
- Six *Poser* characters
- Ten PoserWorld props

Photoshop brushes

- 229 *Photoshop* brushes for you to use in your digital art projects

Video training

- *Bryce 5.5* video training from BryceTech
- *Painter IX* training from Lynda.com

Tutorial files

- All the components you need to complete this month's tutorials

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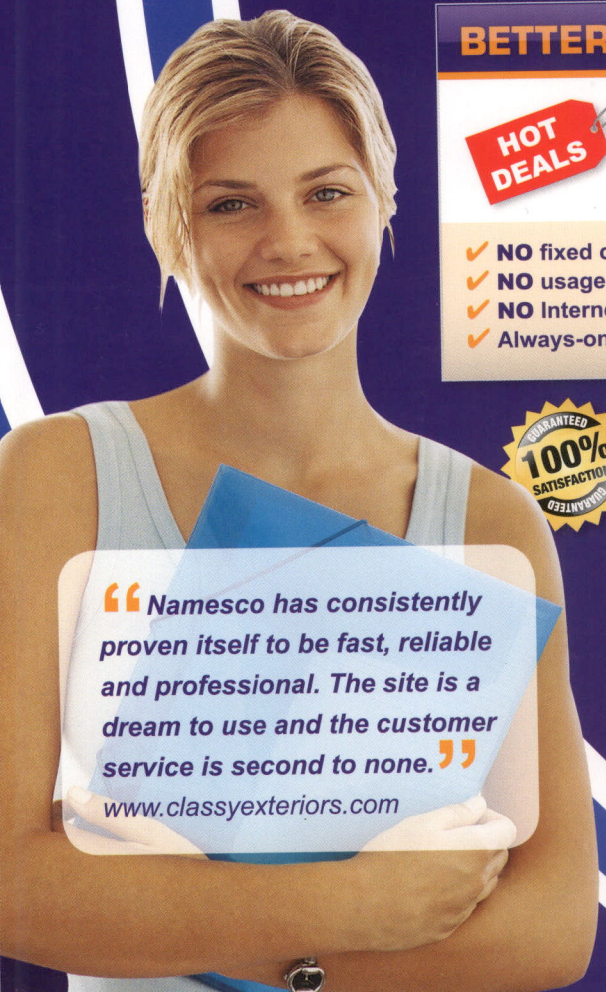
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